







Liturg. 586

- 4, 1

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

On All the
PARTS and OFFICES
OF THE
LITURGY
OF THE
Church of *England*.

Wherein are laid open the HARMONY,
EXCELLENCY, and USEFULNESS of
its Composure.

Useful for all FAMILIES.

VOLUME the FOURTH, in Three Parts.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B.D.
Prebendary of the Church of *Wells*, and Vicar
of *Stokegursy* in *Somersetshire*.

1 Cor. XIV. 12. latter part.

Seek that ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. D. for T. VARNAM and J. OSBORN in *Lombard-street*, W. TAYLOR at the Ship in *Pater-noster-Row*,
H. CLEMENTS at the Half-Moon in *St. Paul's Church-yard*,
and J. BROWNE without *Temple-Bar*. M. DCC. XVI.

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M.DCC. LXXI.



PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

Upon All the
COLLECTS, EPISTLES, and
GOSPELS, to be us'd thro-
out the Year.

In THREE PARTS.

The First reaching from ADVENT-SUNDAYS,
which relate to Christ's first Coming upon
Earth, to ASCENSION-DAY, when he
went back again to Heaven.

The Second beginning with ASCENSION-DAY,
and ending with the Last Sunday after TRINITY.

The Third containing the Epistles and Gospels for
the SAINTS-DAYS thro-out the Year.

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DISCOURSES
PRACTICAL

Upon All the
Gospels, to be us'd thro-
out the Year.

IN THREE PARTS.

The first teaching from Advent-Sundays
which relate to Christ's first Coming upon
Earth, to Ascension-Day, when he
went back again to Heaven.

The second beginning with Ascension-Day
and ending with the Last Sunday after Trinity.

The third containing the Epistles and Gospels for
the Saints Days thro-out the Year.

By MATTHEW HOLE, B.D.
Rector of the Church of St. Andrew and Victor
of Stokebury in Somersetshire.

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Printed by J. D. for T. VALENTINE and J. O. RORNI in York
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and J. BROWN in St. Dunstons Church Lane. MDCCLXXI.



T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in God,

G E O R G E

Lord Bishop of *Bristol*.

M Y L O R D,



THE Doctrine of Christ
and his Apostles, the
Subject of the ensuing
Discourses, being too much op-
[A 3] pos'd

pos'd by the Deists, and perverted by the Dissenters of our Days ; it was requisite to shelter them under the Wing of a Patron, who is a Judg of sound Doctrine, and able thereby to convince or confute Gainfayers.

For this reason I have made bold to venture them Abroad, under the Auspicious Influence of YOUR LORDSHIP'S Protection, as a good Guardian and Defender of the Divine Truths deliver'd in them.

Indeed, the Christian Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, is that sacred Depositum, committed first to the Care of the Fathers, and by them to the Sons of the Church : both which are faithfully

The Dedication. [vii]

ly to keep, and earnestly to contend for it, against all the Assaults of Atheism and Infidelity.

Which Contention is not to be manag'd by Arms, or carnal Weapons, but by Arguments, and spiritual Armour: *Having our Loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breast-Plate of Righteousness, and our Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace: But above all, taking the Shield of Faith, the Sword of the Spirit, and the Helmet of Salvation; which are the best Weapons, and most mighty, thro God, to the pulling down the Strong-holds of Satan, and the building us up in our most Holy Faith.*

My

MY LORD! what is deliver'd
in the following Discourses, is
humbly submitted to YOUR
LORDSHIP's better Judgment;
promising my self a favourable
Acceptance of my weak Endea-
vours herein, a candid Construc-
tion of all Expressions in it, and
a charitable Covering of all the
Defects and Imperfections of the
Undertaking: By which you will
not only encourage, but highly
oblige,

MY LORD,
YOUR LORDSHIP'S
Humbly Devoted Servant,

Matthew Hole.



THE PREFACE.

THE Subject of this large and excellent Part of our Liturgy, is, the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels for the whole Year; the Knowledge whereof being so highly useful and necessary for the informing the Minds, exciting the Affections, and directing the Lives of all good Christians, very well deserves our Pains in explaining, and the Reader's Patience in perusing of them.

But before I enter upon it, 'twill be requisite, by way of Introduction, to premise a few things, touching the Name, Nature, and Ends of each of them; together with the Antiquity of their Use, and the Fitness of them for the Times and Seasons for which they are appointed.

To begin then with the Collects; these are some short, pious, and pithy Prayers, collected out of the Holy Scriptures, usher'd in with such Attributes of God, as are proper and suitable to the Petitions contain'd in them, and offer'd up in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ.

Of the Reason of the Name, divers Accounts are given: As,

First, Some have thought them stil'd Collects, because they are us'd super collectionem Populi, upon the meeting or gathering together of the People in the solemn Assemblies; but that Reason being common to all the publick Prayers of the Church, would give the same Denomination to all the other Prayers utter'd in the Congregation, which we know to be otherwise. And therefore,

Secondly, Others suppose them to be call'd Collects, because they were collected out of the Epistles and Gospels for each Day, to which they belong. But tho this may seem true in some of the Collects in Advent Sundays, and other Parts, yet it cannot be affirm'd of all or most of them; and therefore this may not be taken for the true Reason of the Name.

*Others again, Thirdly, with greater probability, think them stil'd Collects, to distinguish them from those alternate Petitions, which are put up separately by the Minister and People; the Minister saying one Petition, and the People the other, by way of Antiphones and Responses, as may be seen in the Versicles after the Lord's Prayer in the Morning and Evening Service, the Litany, and other Offices: whereas in the Collects, the Minister collects and gathers up the joint Petitions of Priest and People, and presents them alone in one continu'd Prayer unto God. That this is the true Reason of the Name, may be easily gather'd from hence, that where the People bear any Part in the Prayer by way of Response, or make any Answer more than Amen, that is never call'd a Collect, but alternate Prayer: But where the Minister prays alone, and sums up or offers the joint Requests of
the*

the Congregation, without any Return or Reply of the People, that is properly call'd and known by the name of Collect.

The Epistles are certain Portions of Scripture, selected out of the Writings of the Apostles, containing many excellent Rules and Precepts for Instruction and Comfort in all Conditions. They are call'd Epistles, because they were sent by way of Letter by the Apostles to the several Churches or Places to which they are inscrib'd; for which reason they still retain the same Name.

The Gospels are taken out of the Writings of the four Evangelists, who relate the Life and Actions of our Blessed Saviour; as the Doctrine that he taught, and the Miracles by which he confirm'd it: both which being of great use for the strengthening our Faith and Hope in him, are piously order'd to be read every Lord's Day in the Ears of the People. And in honour to our Saviour, whose Words and Works they are, the Church hath commanded them to be read and heard standing; which is a Posture of Reverence and Resolution to adhere and stand to them.

This for the Name and Nature of these things, the End whereof is to raise our Affections, and to relieve the Wants both of Priest and People.

As for the Antiquity of the Use of them, that plainly appears from the antient Liturgies of the Church, and the Testimony of the antient Fathers, who have handed them down thro all Ages to our time. St. Austin tells us, that in the Latin Church the Apostolical Lesson was first read, then a Psalm or Hymn sung, and after that the Gospel, Homil. 10. de Verbo Apostolico. St. Chrysostom informs us, that in the Greek Church, the Mini-

fter stood up, and with a loud Voice call'd upon the People, saying, Let us attend; and then the Lessons, with the Epistles and Gospels, immediately follow'd, as may be seen in the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom.

As for the Fitness of them to the Days and Times to which they are annex'd, in that, any wise Man that will consider and compare them together, may easily see and satisfy himself. The great Festivals appointed to commemorate the Birth, Circumcision, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Saviour, and the like, are all fitted with Portions of Scripture suitable to those Solemnities. And all other Sundays in the Year are provided with such Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, as serve either to instruct us in some Lesson, or to remember some Blessing, or direct to some Duty necessary or useful for us: as, to Mortification, Repentance, and Self-denial in Lent; to Faith, Hope, and Newness of Life, in the Sundays after Easter; to the Gifts, Graces, and Fruits of the Spirit, after Pentecost: by which we may the more easily attain to the knowledg of Holy Mysteries, and be better assisted in the Practice of those Vertues, that are taught by them. For this reason it was that the Homilies or Sermons of the Fathers were generally upon the Readings of those Days; and when these are laid aside, and practical Discourses upon them turn'd out of the Church, 'twill not be in the power of weekly Sermons, on other Heads, to preserve sound Doctrine, or any true Religion among us.

Thus hath the Church taken the best care it can, that all things be done to the use of edifying, and in that Decency and Order, that may tend most to the building of us up in our most holy Faith, and making us wise unto Salvation.

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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES
*on all the Collects, Epistles, and
 Gospels throughout the whole
 Year, &c.*

DISCOURSE I.

The EPISTLE for the First Sunday in *Advent*.

Rom. xiii. 8. to the end.

*Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another ; for
 he that loveth another, hath fulfill'd the Law, &c.*

THIS Day begins the Ecclesiastical Year, which is computed, not by the Course of the Sun, but by the Coming of our Saviour, or the Time of the Appearance of the Sun of Righteousness. For the great Festival of Christmas, or Christ's Birthday, hath some Sundays going before it, and some following after it, the better to adorn and celebrate so great a Solemnity.

Those that go before it, are the four Sundays in Advent, so call'd, because they are to prepare us for Christ's Advent, or the time of his coming in the Flesh ; and of these, this Day is the first.

The Collect appointed for it, puts us in mind of a double Advent or Coming of the Son of God : the one respects

2 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the

this Life, when he came as a Saviour, to *visit us in great Humility*; the other respects the Life to come, when he shall come as a Judge, *in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the Quick and the Dead*. And to prepare us for both, the Church teaches us to pray this day for *Grace, that we may cast away the Works of Darkness, and put upon us the Armour of Light, now in the time of this mortal Life, that at the last Day we may rise to the Life immortal*.

The Epistle for the Day, out of which the Collect was taken, directs us to those Graces of God's Holy Spirit, and Acts of a good Life, that are necessary to qualify and fit us to celebrate the Coming of the Son of God in the Flesh, and to make us Partakers of the Joy and Benefit of his Appearance. To which end,

It begins with the two great Duties of Justice and Charity, in these words; *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*. Where the Apostle would have no other Debt lie upon us, but that of Love, which we should be always owing and always paying: For Christianity doth not dispense with common Honesty, or discharge us from any Debt either to Superiours, Inferiours or Equals; but rather confirms and heightens the Obligation, willing us to *render to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, and Honour to whom Honour*: that is, to be true and just in all our Dealings with all Men, and to be kindly-affection'd one to another in brotherly Love. These are the two cardinal Vertues, upon which, as upon two Hinges, the whole Law turns; for *he that loveth another, hath fulfill'd the Law*. This excellent Grace of Charity contains and runs thro the whole Decalogue, especially the Precepts of the second Table, in which the Apostle here instanceth; *For this, thou shalt not commit Adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*. This he farther proves from that known Property of Love, that *it worketh no Ill to its Neighbour*, but on the contrary, is ever ready to do him all good Offices; and therefore *Love is the fulfilling, or the Perfection of the Law*.

These great Duties are here the more earnestly press'd, upon the account of the time, which was either the time of the Conversion of these Romans to the Christian Faith, or the time of Christ's Coming, or the near Approach of the

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the Day of Redemption; all which should encourage them to their Duty, and make them more watchful than they were before; which is the Sense of these words, *That knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of Sleep, for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believ'd.* Where he calls upon them to prepare themselves for the *Sun of Righteousness*, which was rising upon them with *Healing in his Wings*; and therefore it was high time to awake out of the Sleep of Sin, and to put on the Garments of Praise, to be ready to welcome him, according to that of *Isaiah, Arise and shine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*; Isa. 60. 1. For now (saith the Apostle) is our Salvation, or Deliverance promis'd by Christ, *much nigher at hand, than when we first receiv'd the Faith.* Which should encourage us to be diligent and persevere to the end.

And the rather, because (as he goes on to tell us) *the Night is far spent, and the Day is at hand*; let us therefore *cast off the Works of Darkness, and let us put on the Armour of Light.* Where by the *Night* we are to understand, either the Night of Ignorance and Darkness, in which these *Romans* were, before they receiv'd the Light of the Gospel; or the Night of Affliction and Persecution, in which they were for some time after the receiving it: both which are here said to be in a great measure past and over with them.

As for the Night of Ignorance and Darkness, in which they were before their embracing of Christianity, that was very black and dismal; for during that time, they were truly said to be benighted, *having their Understanding darken'd thro the Ignorance that was in them.* The wisest of them walk'd, or rather wander'd on, in thick Darkness, being so bewilder'd, that they could not see or find the way that they should go; by which means they fell into many gross Errors, and vile Enormities, of which the Apostle minds them in the first Chapter of this Epistle.

And he tells the *Ephesians* the same thing; *Ye were sometimes Darkness*, saith he, Eph. 5. 8. that is, in their Gentile State; they were not only dark, but Darkness it self, for they were *without God, without Christ, and without Hope in the World*; as he tells them, Eph. 2. 12. They were *without God*, not without any God, for they had Gods many, and Lords many; they fell down to carv'd Images of their own making, they worshipped the Sun,
B 2 Moon,

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Moon, and Stars, and the whole Host of Heaven ; yea, they ador'd their very Diseases, and idoliz'd their own Infirmities. But they were without the Knowledg of the true God, that made Heaven and Earth, of whom they had heard little, and knew less. And as they were without God, so were they *without Christ*, of whom they had heard and known nothing, being *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise* ; and so must be *without Hope*, of having any Salvation from him.

This was their gloomy and forlorn Condition, as it is naturally of all Men, and is here represented by the black Name of Night, and justly too, for the Darknes and Disconsolateness, and the Dangers that attend it.

Now this *Night* (the Apostle tells them) *was far spent*, and so it was by the dawning of the Light of the Gospel, which began to shine out upon them ; by which the Mists of Error were scatter'd, and their former Ignorance vanish'd like Darknes at the approach of the Sun, as it is with us at this day.

2dly, By the *Night* here, some understand the Night of Affliction and Persecution, under which the primitive Christians sometimes were. 'Twas the hard Fate of the first Converts to Christianity, to be presently try'd in the Furnace of Affliction ; for living under Heathen Emperors and Governours, that were bitter Enemies to Christ and his Religion, it could not be but his Followers must taste of that bitter Cup, of which their Master drank to the very Dregs. By which means they groan'd under many sad and heavy Pressures, being for a while under a black Cloud of Persecution, and enduring a long Night of Affliction.

Now this Night too was far spent with them, and their Deliverance was at hand, the black Cloud of Persecution being in a great measure blown over, and the Day-Spring from on high dawning and visiting them with his Salvation.

And this is *the Day*, which, in the next words, is said *to be at hand* ; namely, a Day of Light and Knowledg, in opposition to their former Darknes and Ignorance ; and a Day of Deliverance and Salvation, in opposition to their former Sufferings and Persecution. For the

1st, The Day of Light and Knowledg began to dawn upon them at their entrance upon Christianity, and after shin'd out more and more to the perfect Day ; being *turned*

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ned from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. Now are ye light in the Lord, saith our Apostle to the *Ephesians*; your former Darknes is gone, and a clear convincing Light is let in upon your Soul. Now you can see the Danger and Deformity of your evil ways, in which you sometime walk'd, and behold the Beauty of Holiness, to which you are call'd. Now you are thorowly instructed in the Knowledg of the true God, and the right way of worshipping him, to which you were before Strangers. You are now brought to the Knowledg of Christ, the only Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, and so are come to some well-grounded Hopes of Salvation by him. And whereas the wisest Heathens had but faint Conjectures of a future Life and the Immortality of the Soul, you are become better enlighten'd in both; Life and Immortality being now brought into a clearer Light by the Gospel. Then,

2dly, For the Day of Salvation and Deliverance from Persecution, that likewise drew nigh in the Apostles days, ~~for~~ then was their Salvation nearer than when they believ'd; but it hath been much nearer since: The Storm of Persecution, as to the Rage and Violence of it from Heathen Princes, hath long since ceas'd, and the Church hath for many Ages enjoy'd much calmer and better Days under the happy Protection of Christian Kings and Queens; inso-much that Persecution for Christianity is now by the Blessing of God very rarely found or felt.

Thus we see what that Night is, which is here said to be far spent, *viz.* a Night of Ignorance and Persecution: And likewise what that Day is, which is said to be at hand, *viz.* a Day of Knowledg and Salvation, or a Deliverance from temporal and eternal Evils.

But some interpret these words to a larger Sense, taking Night here for the dark State of this present Life, which, for the Shortness and Gloominess of it, is often call'd and compar'd to Night; and this may be said to be far spent by many of us. And by Day they understand the Day of the Resurrection to another and better Life, which for its Length and Lightsomness is compar'd to Day; and this too draws nigh, and is at hand with all of us. In this sense they take that of the Psalmist, *Heaviness endureth for a Night, but Joy cometh in the morning*; meaning, that Sorrow and Sadness may continue for the short space of this Life; but Joy and Gladness cometh in the Morning of the Resurrection to another.

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But in all these Senses the Apostle's Inference and Advice from them in the next words is very good; *Let us therefore cast off the Works of Darkneſs, and let us put on the Armour of Light.* Where,

(1.) From the Night's being far ſpent, we are exhorted to caſt off the Works of Darkneſs; where by the Works of Darkneſs are meant all manner of Sin and Wickedneſs, which are ſo call'd, becauſe they are commonly acted in the dark; they covet Darkneſs, and likewise lead to Blackneſs of Darkneſs for evermore. There is that natural Pravity and Deformity in Sin, that puts Men upon all manner of Arts and Shifts to hide the Evil and Shame of it; *He that doth evil* (ſaith our Saviour) *hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reprov'd.* And the Reason given for *Mens loving Darkneſs rather than Light,* is *becauſe their Deeds are evil*: John 3. 19, 20.

But the Apoſtle, in the next Verſe, mentions ſome particular Works of Darkneſs, which he would have all Chriſtians to caſt off againſt this time: And they are *Rioting and Drunkenneſs, Chambering and Wantonneſs, Strife and Envy.* All which being Deeds of Darkneſs, are highly unbecoming the Children of Light, and unfit us for our Saviour's Advent, or the Coming of this great Light into the World.

As for *Rioting and Drunkenneſs*, theſe are commonly Night Works, and ſhun the Light of the Day; for *they that are drunk* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *are drunk in the Night*: tho ſome in our Days have caſt off this Modeſty in ſinning, and are not aſham'd of this Vice even in the Face of the Sun.

As for *Chambering and Wantonneſs*, theſe too covet a Covering of Darkneſs and Secrecy, to hide the Foulneſs of the Vice. *The Adulterer watches the Twilight*, ſaith *Solomon*, and takes the Evening and the dark Nights to commit and conceal his Folly; *Prov. 7. 9.* Tho ſome Monſters of Wickedneſs are now arriv'd to that degree of Impudence, as to declare their Sins as *Sodom*, and even to boaſt and glory in their Shame.

As for *Strife and envying*, theſe likewise affect Diſguiſes, and have recourſe to palliating Pretences to cover their Obliquity; tho the Diſguiſe often falls off, or grows thredbare, and the Hypocriſy is ſeen thro the Thinneſs of the Covering. And generally all ſorts of Sinners have learnt from our firſt Parents to hide their Faults, and to gather

Fig-leaves to cover the Shame and Deformity of their Vices. So that these, and all other kinds of Sin and Wickedness, are the Works of Darkness, which we are here call'd upon to cast off; that is, not only to avoid the practice, but to abandon the love and liking of them; to hate every false way, and to *have no fellowship with such unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.*

(2.) From the Day's being at hand, we are directed to put upon us the *Armour of Light*; where by the Armour of Light, we are to understand the Graces of God's Holy Spirit, which being given to us, furnish and fortify the Mind, and at once adorn and arm the Soul. They are call'd Armour, from the Safeguard and Defence they give us; and Armour of Light, because they guide our Feet and direct our Steps. Of this kind is the Armour mention'd by the Apostle, in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, where he speaks of the *Girdle of Truth*, to fasten Knowledge upon the Mind, and to fortify it against Error; of the *Breastplate of Righteousness*, to arm it with Integrity, and to preserve it from evil Practices; of the *Shield of Faith*, to guard it against the Assaults of Temptation; and of the *Helmet of Salvation*, to secure it from all present and future Dangers. These we are to put on, not only as Cloathing to keep us warm, but as Armour to defend us in all Assaults of our Enemies. But the Apostle minds us here of two Pieces of this Armour of Light, which he wills us to put on; and they are, Honesty towards Men, and Piety towards God: the former is express'd by *walking honestly as in the day*, the latter by *putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

1. I say, we are exhorted to *walk honestly as in the day*, ver. 13. that is, to avoid all Night-revellings, together with all Acts of Dishonesty, Deceit and Fraud, which covet false Lights, and false Arts to escape discovery; and to do things fair and honest in the sight of all Men. These things can bear the Light, and are both able and willing to be seen; they do not skulk or hide their Heads, but rather court than fly Observation: call'd therefore the *Armour of Light*, because they arm us against Shame and Fear, and bring us off with Honour and Triumph. This is to *walk as Children of Light*, and of the Day, and not of Night and Darkness, *Eph. 5. 8. 1 Thess. 5. 5.*

2. We are exhorted to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, as the best Armour of proof against all Evil, ver. 14. Now

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the putting on Christ cannot be meant of his Person, nor barely of his Name or Profession; tho *as many as are baptiz'd into Christ are*, in some sense, said to put on Christ, by becoming Members of Christ's Body; *Gal. 3.27.* Yet something else is here imply'd in that Expression, *viz.* the putting on the Vertues of Christ, and adorning our Souls with the Graces of his Holy Spirit. 'Tis to be cloth'd with his Humility, to be array'd in his Purity, and to be invested with the Robes of his Righteousness or Integrity. And these we are to put on, not as Garments that may be put off again, but as Habits that are still to be kept on, and continue as the standing Furniture and Ornaments of the Soul. This is elsewhere express'd by *putting off the old Man, which is corrupt according to the sinful Lusts*; and by *putting on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.* And he that hath thus put on the Lord Jesus Christ in the Purity of his Nature and Image, will *make no provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*; but will learn to purify himself, even as he is pure: which is the best Wedding-garment we can put on, to meet the Bridegroom of our Souls.

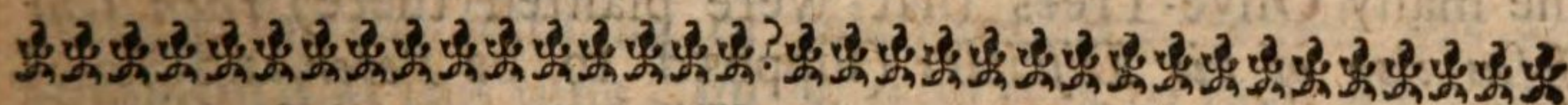
Thus we see the Drift and Design of the Epistle for this Day, which is to lay aside all wicked and sinful Practices, that unfit us for the Coming of our Saviour; and to adorn our selves with all those Graces and Vertues, that serve to qualify us for his Advent, and to prepare us for the great Festival of his Nativity.

To conclude then, let us from hence learn, *1st*, To cast off all the Works of Darkness, which are put to shame and discomfited by the Light. Let us avoid the Night-works of Rioting and Drunkenness, of Chambering and Wantonness, of Strife and Envy, which cannot bear the Light, but seek Darkness and Disguises to cover their Fou'ness and Deformity. The Night of Ignorance and Persecution is now farther spent with us, than it was with these *Romans*, and we are better instructed in the Evil and Danger of all sinful Courses; and therefore it will not become us to live any longer in them, for if we do, *this will be our Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and we love Darkness rather than Light, because our Deeds are evil.* Remember that 'tis beneath the Dignity of a Man to do what he dares not own, and to covet Masks and Vizards to hide the Uglinefs of his ways; especially con-

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considering, that they will e'er long be expos'd before Angels and Men, to his eternal Shame and Confusion of Face ; which should make us hate all those things that hate the Light.

2dly, Let us put on the Armour of Light, which will defend us from all Shame and Rebuke now, and at last bring us to the Light of everlasting Life. Let us *have our Loins girt with Truth, having on the Breast-plate of Righteousness, and our Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace* ; that being thus arm'd as it were *Cap-a-pe*, we may be furnish'd with spiritual Strength enough to vanquish all Temptations, and to quench all the fiery Darts of Satan : looking for the blessed Hope and Appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, especially now in the time of this mortal Life, when the Son of God came to visit us in great Humility, that we may be prepar'd for his second Coming in his glorious Majesty, and from this mortal Life may be translated to a blessed Immortality : which God grant, for the Merits of Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Glory and Honour now and for evermore.



DISCOURSE II.

The G O S P E L for the First Sunday in Advent.

St. Matthew xxi. 1—14.

When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethpage, unto the Mount of Olives ; then sent Jesus two of his Disciples, saying unto them, Go unto the Village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an Ass tyed, and a Colt with her ; loose them, and bring them unto me, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day puts us in mind of Christ's Coming, and our preparing for it, by casting off the Works of Darkness, and putting on the Armour of Light, that we may meet and welcome this Sun of Righteousness.

The

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The Collect prays for the same, and withal minds us of the Manner of his Coming; and that was, in great Humility. Accordingly,

This Gospel for the Day acquaints us with his humble, and yet triumphant Entry into *Jerusalem*. The Relation of it consists of two parts:

The *First* is, of the Meanness and Humility of his Garb and Equipage in his Entrance to the City; for he was not mounted on any stately Steed, or triumphant Chariot, but came riding on an Ass, the dullest and most despicable of all Creatures.

The *Second* is, of the Pomp and Glory of his passing through it; which was, with great Shouts and Acclamations of the People. Of both these we have some account in this Gospel.

It begins with a Narration of the Circumstances of Time and Place that went before it, in these words; *When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethpage or Bethany (a Town about a mile distant from Jerusalem, and situate at the foot of the Mount of Olives, so call'd from the many Olive-Trees that were planted there) then sent Jesus two of his Disciples (suppos'd to be Peter and John) saying unto them, Go ye into the Village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an Ass tyed, and a Colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto me.* The Message seem'd strange to them at first, not knowing the End or Design of it: however, that they might not doubt of speeding, he farther added, *And if any Man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.* Where we may observe, that tho he were Lord of all, yet would he invade no one's Property, without asking leave and giving satisfaction.

But why did our Lord make choice of such a dull contemptible Creature as an Ass, to ride into the great City of *Jerusalem*; which, one would think, should rather expose him to Scorn, than procure him any Honour or Reception worthy of him? Why, the next words will unriddle that matter: *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, Tell the Daughter of Zion, behold! thy King cometh unto thee, meek, sitting upon an Ass, and a Colt the Foal of an Ass.* This Prophecy is extant, *Zech. 9. 9.* where

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where many Circumstances of this Entrance of our Saviour into *Jerusalem*, are foretold and describ'd.

For his Person, he is there stil'd a King; *Behold thy King cometh!* And so indeed he was, being the Son of *David*, to whom the Kingdom descended. So the Prophecy cited by *St. Peter* declares, *Acts 2. 30. God hath sworn with an Oath unto David, that of the Fruit of his Loins according to the Flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne:* tho he did not think fit for some time to ascend this Throne, but rather conceal'd than claim'd any Title to it. When the *Jews* would have made him a King, he convey'd himself invisibly out of the Press, and wrought a Miracle (as one hath observ'd) to avoid an Advancement; and that, as he tells them after, because his time for that was not yet come. Tho he went up thrice a year to *Jerusalem* for many Years together, according to the Custom of the *Jews*, yet he never made any Overture or Semblance of being King of the *Jews*, before this last time of his Entry, when, according to the Prophecy of *Zachary*, his time was come of entering *Jerusalem* as a King; which he accordingly did with very humble Pomp, for he was mounted only on an Ass, and a Colt the Foal of an Ass: and that too was done merely for the fulfilling of this Prophecy, which was accomplish'd at this time; for he who was to fulfil all Righteousness, would not leave any one Prophecy relating to the Messiah unfulfil'd, telling us, that *Heaven and Earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God's Word must pass away or fall to the ground; Mat. 5.* 'Twas in order to this, that Christ sent his Disciples on this Errand, who disputed not his Commands, but readily obey'd them. So the next words tell us, that *the Disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the Ass and the Colt, and put on them their Clothes, and they set him thereon.* *St. Mark* tells us of the Colt, that it was not before back'd, for it was one *whereon never Man sate*, *Mark 11. 2.* And when they loos'd the Colt to carry it away, 'tis said, the Owner and others standing by, ask'd the Disciples, *What do ye loosing the Colt?* And when they reply'd, as Jesus commanded, that the Lord had need of them, they immediately *let them go:* the Lord invisibly charm'd the Owner's Spirit to surrender them, upon hearing the Lord had need of them. When they had brought the Ass and Colt to him, instead of a Saddle and Trappings, they put their Clothes on them; and in this mean Furniture they
set

let him thereon: and being thus mounted, he rode on to *Jerusalem*, attended only with a Company of poor Fishermen his Disciples, and a Rabble of the meaner sort. By this was fulfill'd that part of the Prophecy of *Zachary*, *Behold thy King cometh meek and lowly!* for in this March nothing but Meekness and Innocence went in triumph, and only Humility rode in state. Now if we compare this with the Magnificence and Splendor of the *Roman* Triumphs, which were set forth with all the Pomp and Pageantry that the World could afford, being crown'd with Laurels, and adorn'd with Works of a rack'd Invention and immense Charge; this of our Saviour's will appear to a carnal Eye but as a Mock-Triumph, or a Triumph in Burlesque, wherein the Attendants were mean, and the humble Conqueror came riding on an Ass, the most abject and despicable of all the Beasts of Burden. And yet if we look more narrowly into this solemn Procession of our Saviour, and with a spiritual Eye observe the Glory that appear'd under all these Circumstances of Meanness and Poverty; we shall find the Glory hereof far to excel the Triumphs of all the Princes in the World: for his Greatness appear'd under the Veil of all his Meanness, and his Divinity shined through the Mantle of his Humility. And this will lead us,

Secondly, From the humble to the glorious part of this our Saviour's Entrance into *Jerusalem*. Tho there was little or nothing of human Invention or Cost seen in it, yet the Contrivance and Effects of Divine Wisdom manifestly appear'd therein; for 'twas the fulfilling of a Prophecy of him many hundred Years before, and a Lecture of Lowliness and Meekness to all his Followers ever after. Tho there was no Ostentation of worldly Pomp, yet there were Trophies of a higher and more spiritual nature carry'd before him; he rode on triumphing over Principalities and Powers, over the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, and spiritual Wickedness in high places, and led Satan the Prince of the Air in Chains. In a word, his holy Life and Doctrine, his Miracles and mighty Works gave a greater Lustre, and rais'd more Admiration, than any earthly Greatness or Grandeur could give him. And this was most suitable to the Nature and Design of his spiritual Kingdom, which was not like earthly Princes to make a show of Glory and Greatness, but to bring them into Contempt; and not to triumph in the vain things of this World, but to triumph over them.

And

And yet in this his March and Entrance into *Jerusalem*, he wanted not many Signs and Tokens of worldly Pomp; for great *Multitudes spread their Garments in the way*: a Ceremony antiently used at the Inauguration of a King, as we read, *2 Kings 9. 13.* Others cut down Branches from the Trees, and strewed them in the way: a sign of publick Rejoicing and Honour formerly used, as it is yet at this day. The Branches they cut down were from the Palm-Trees, and their strewing them in the way betoken'd their Wishes of Victory and Prosperity, as appears by the next words; *And the Multitudes that went before and follow'd after, cry'd, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David!* that is, they follow'd him with Shouts and Acclamations, usual at the sight and appearance of Princes. The Term *Hosanna* is a Hebrew word, and signifies the same with *Salva quæso, Save I pray*: 'tis suppos'd to be taken out of the 118th Psalm, ver. 25. *Save us, O Lord, send us now Prosperity.* 'Twas used by the Jews in the Feast of Tabernacles, when they were commanded to take Boughs of goodly Trees, and Branches of Palm-Trees, and to rejoice before the Lord; *Lev. 23. 40.* From hence the Custom of cutting down Boughs, and carrying Branches of Palm-Trees, was deriv'd to our Saviour's time, and from thence to ours: and *Hosannas* were used as Acclamations of Joy and Prayer, as *Vivat Rex*, God save the King or Queen, are to this day.

Now these *Hosannas* are here said to be sounded to the Son of David, that is, to Christ who descended from the Loins and Linage of David, and was thereby own'd and receiv'd as the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. To which Acclamations they added that Divine Hymn or Doxology, *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!* which words likewise are taken out of the 118th Psalm, ver. 26. where the same words are spoken literally of David, upon his Election and Anointing to the Kingdom of Israel, and mystically and prophetically of this Son of David, the promis'd Messiah and King of Israel, to whom they are here apply'd. And because for these words chiefly is this Gospel appointed to be read for this Day, 'twill be requisite to speak a little to them.

And, 1st, He is here pronounc'd and proclaim'd *Blessed*; that is, one to whom all Blessing and Praise is due, not only for the Greatness of his Person, but the Goodness of his Message, and his Kindness to the World. *Behold! from henceforth all Generations shall call me blessed* (said the Blessed Virgin)

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Virgin) for being the Mother of our Saviour; and indeed she was highly favour'd among Women, for having that Honour. But the Son is far more worthy to be call'd *Blessed*, seeing *all the Nations of the Earth are blessed in him*, and receive Blessings from him; for which reason he is justly stil'd *God blessed for evermore*, Rom. 9. 5.

2dly, He is describ'd here by the Title of *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, *he that cometh*; *Blessed is he that cometh*. In the Old Testament he is sometimes stil'd *Shiloh*, which signifieth one that is sent, Gen. 49. and sometimes *Messiah*, which signifies one anointed for the Work of Man's Salvation. In the New Testament, among other Titles, he is call'd *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, *he that cometh*, or *he that should come*. So St. John's Disciples ask'd him, *Art thou he that should come?* Mat. 11. 3. And elsewhere, *Where is he that should come?* He was before *the Desire and the Hope of all Nations*, and was earnestly expected at the time of his Coming, and so became *the Joy of all People*. And as in those Countries, where the Sun is a long time absent, when it begins to appear, the People meet it with Shouts, crying out, *ἰδὲ ὁ ἥλιος*, Behold the Sun! so when this Sun of Righteousness arose to the benighted World, he was welcom'd with Acclamations of Joy, saying, *ἰδὲ ὁ υἱος*, Behold the Son of God, *who taketh away the Sins of the World!* and, *Blessed is he that cometh*. To which is added,

3dly, The Mission or Authority by which he came; and that is, *in the Name of the Lord*: *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*. To come in the Name of the Lord, is either to come by his Appointment, or to come with his Authority; both which may be well enough meant in this place.

For, (1.) Christ came by his Appointment; he was anointed to this Office before the World began, and both the Time and Manner of his Coming was order'd by the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledg of God. Christ's Kingdom was of God's Assignment; *Behold I have set my King*, saith he, *upon my holy Hill of Zion!* Psal. 2. 6. And the Peoples saluting him as the Messiah, was but the publishing the Divine Will and Counsel; which made him come in his Name.

And so he did, (2.) by coming with his Authority: he acted as God, and exercis'd a Divine Authority during his stay in the World, for he reign'd in and over the Hearts of Men; he forgave Sins, and heal'd all the Maladies both of
Soul

Gospel for the first Sunday in Advent. 15

Soul and Body. And well may he be call'd *Blessed*, who thus came in the Name of the Lord; or, as others read the Words, *Blessed in the Lord's Name be he that was thus sent by him, and to act for him in the Work of redeeming and reconciling Mankind unto him.* And therefore, *Glory be to God on high, and Hosanna in the highest.*

Thus we see the humble Pomp of our Saviour's glorious Entrance into *Jerusalem*, where tho his Equipage and Attendants were mean, yet his Reception was great; for he was acknowledg'd as a King, a great Prophet, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the World, and receiv'd accordingly: for *when he was come into Jerusalem, all the City was mov'd, saying with astonishment, Who is this?* And being answer'd by the Multitude, *This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee;* St. *Luke* tells us, that they all began to rejoice for their long-expected Messiah, and praised God with a loud Voice, for the mighty things they had seen.

And now having follow'd our Saviour to *Jerusalem*, and waited upon him into the City, we are next to observe his Actions and Behaviour there. And here the first thing we read of, was his going *into the Temple*, and his first Visit was to the House of God; which shews the great Regard he had to that Holy Place, and by his Example teaches us to do the same. But at his coming there, the Joy of his Reception was turn'd into a just Indignation for the Profanation he found in it: for he found the Temple turn'd into a Market, where sundry Wares and Commodities were *bought and sold*: there were the *Tables of Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves*; the sight of which mov'd our Saviour's Zeal and Indignation against them. The Pretence they had for it, was, that the things sold there were all necessary for Offerings and Sacrifices, to be ready for the Service of the Temple; as Beasts for Sacrifice, Incense, Wine, and Doves, which were commanded for Offerings; all which were brought and sold there, to be at hand as the Occasion and Devotion of those times requir'd. As for the Money-Changers, they alledg'd that they had Tables there to exchange Money into the *Jewish* Shekels and Half-Shekels, appointed by God for Trespass-Offerings and other Occasions, as we read, *Lev. 5. 15.*

All which Excuses weigh'd nothing with our Saviour, who could not see his Father's House made a House of Merchandize,

chandize, knowing it to be set apart and devoted only to Sacred Uses, and not to be prostituted or profan'd by such secular Purposes. And therefore we read here, that he *cast out all them that bought and sold in the Temple, and overthrew the Tables of the Mony-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves.* St. Mark adds, that he *would not suffer that any Man should carry any Vessel thorow the Temple,* Mark 11. 16. So tender was he of the least Defecration of those Holy Places! St. John tells us, that he did this with a more than ordinary Zeal and Passion; for he made a Scourge himself, and drove them all out of the Temple, with the Sheep and Oxen, and pour'd out the Changers Mony and overthrew their Tables, and said to them that sold Doves, *Take these things hence, and make not my Father's House a House of Merchandize.* By which he fulfill'd that Prophecy of him mention'd by David, and here remember'd by his Disciples, that it was written, *The Zeal of thy House hath eaten me up,* Psal. 69. 9. & John 2. 15, 16, 17. After which, he clos'd his Discourse with this sharp Rebuke; *It is written, my House shall be called the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.*

Thus I have briefly consider'd the several things contain'd in the Gospel for this Day: From whence we may infer the following Lessons. As,

From the Meanness of our Saviour's Equipage and Appearance, we may learn the great Lesson of Humility, and Contempt of the World. This is what he recommends to us by his own Example; *Learn of me* (saith he) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* He who was Lord of all, might, if he had pleas'd, have enter'd *Jerusalem* with all the Pomp and Magnificence that Heaven and Earth could have dress'd him out withal: he might have come with a numerous Train of Angels, and the Heavenly Host to adorn his Triumph, as also with all the Gallantry and Greatness that the Earth could afford; but he chose rather to appear in a Dress of Humility, on purpose to beat down the Price of the World, and to expose its admir'd Vanities. At his Birth, when he was worship'd by some Kings, and fear'd by others, he was content to lie in a Manger; and when he fed many thousands by Miracles, he was willing himself to be in a condition of Want and Hunger, merely to instil the Lessons of Mortification and Self-denial; to teach the

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Honourable to be humble, the Mighty to be meek, and to use their Power not for Pride and Ostentation, but for the Good and Benefit of their Inferiours. And now how can any that call themselves his Followers, affect that Glory and Greatness, which he so much despis'd; or glue their Hearts to the World, which he thus endeavour'd to wean them from?

Lastly, From Christ's whipping the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, let us learn to have a due Regard for the Church or House of God, and to honour the Place where his Honour dwells. God hath made that the Seat of his special Presence and Residence, where he hath promis'd to meet and bless his People. He hath set apart and consecrated those Holy Places to his own Service; let us not then profane them, by putting them to common Uses: let us not make the House of God a place of Traffick and Merchandize, for that is to make it a Den of Thieves; nor let us use it as a place of common Eating and Drinking, for that is to despise the Church of God: much less, let us prefer Barns, Halls, or Ware-houses before it. But let us, as God hath commanded, reverence his Sanctuary, by frequenting and shewing all due Honour to it; so shall we shortly be translated from these earthly Tabernacles to the Mansions of Bliss and Glory.





DISCOURSE III.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday in
Advent.

Rom. xv. 4 ——— 14.

Whatsoever Things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning, that we, thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope. Now the God of Patience and Consolation grant you to be like-minded, &c.

THE Church, to prepare us farther for Christ's Coming in the Flesh, sends us this Day, as Christ did the *Pharisees*, to the Holy Scriptures, for they are they that testify of him; all the Prophecies and Promises extant of him, being recorded there for our Use and Benefit. The Collect for the Day acquaints us, that God hath caus'd all Holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, and therefore prays, that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of his Holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Epistle for the Day, out of which this Collect was taken, tells us likewise in the beginning, that *whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning*: that is, the Prophecies of old, as well as the latter Precepts or Promises, were all design'd for our Instruction, *that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope*; meaning, that we may have Patience in waiting, Joy in waiting for them, and Comfort in the fulfilling and enjoying of them. So that these Words, which direct the Service of this Day, hold forth to us,

First, The Excellency and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which are here said to be *written*, that is, of God, or Men inspir'd by him. *Secondly*,

Epistle for the second Sunday in Advent. 19

Secondly, The Usefulness of them ; they were written for our Learning. And,

Thirdly, The End and Design of them, that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope.

First, I say, we have here the Excellency and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which are said to be written of God, or Men commission'd and inspir'd by him: So St. Paul expressly tells us, All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, 2 Tim. 3. 16. And St. Peter to the same purpose, Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God spake and writ as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost ; 2 Pet. 1. 21. This is affirm'd here of the Prophets, who writ and foretold afore-time of the coming of the Messias ; and the same is said by the Apostles, that they follow'd not any cunningly devis'd Fables, when they made known unto you the Power and Coming of the Lord Jesus, but were Eye-Witnesses of his Majesty ; ver. 16. And both confirm'd the Truth of what they deliver'd concerning him, by those Miracles and mighty Works, that made it gain Belief every where. If any question'd the Truth of their Doctrine or Mission, they presently convinc'd them, by healing the Sick, giving Sight to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, yea, and Life to the Dead ; and by many Miracles set the Matter beyond all Doubt or Contradiction. And as they thus confirm'd what they wrote by the Broad Seal of Heaven, so did they seal the Truth of what they deliver'd with their own Blood, laying down their Lives in the defence of it, and taking it upon their Death, that all they had said was true, which Men are not wont to do for Fables or Impostures. Besides, the Excellency and Sublimity of the Truths contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, shew them to be Divine ; they carry the Stamp of a Divine Authority upon them, and plainly shew that Flesh and Blood could never reveal them.

Add to all this, the universal Consent of all Ages, who have receiv'd these sacred Writings for the infallible Dictates of a Divine Spirit ; and the constant Tradition of the Church, which hath all along own'd and handed them down to us as the Oracles of God : all which is enough to satisfy any unprejudic'd Person of the Divine Authority of these Writings.

Then for their Antiquity, the Text minds us of their being written aforetime ; that is, of a very antient date ;

for no Writings can vie Antiquity with those of *Moses* and the Prophets, nor have convey'd to us such sublime and sacred Mysteries. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the Usefulness of the Holy Scriptures, which are here said to be *written for our Learning*. They teach us our Duty both to God and Man, and shew us how to demean our selves in all the Capacities and Stations of human Life ; yea, they are able (as St. Paul told *Timothy*) to make us wise unto Salvation, thro Faith which is in Christ Jesus ; 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16. for they contain in them all things necessary to Salvation, and direct in the way that leads to Eternal Life : and therefore he commends *Timothy*, that he had known them from a Child, and been educated in them from his Youth ; adding, that they came from God, and are profitable for Doctrine, that is, to teach us what things ought to be known and believ'd by us ; for Reproof, namely of such Errors and false Doctrines as are to be rejected ; for Correction, viz. of the Vices and corrupt Practices of Mens Lives ; for Instruction in Righteousness, that is, to instruct them in the Principles of a holy Life, and the Precepts of a Christian Conversation : That the Man of God may be perfect, and thorowly furnish'd unto all good Works ; that the Teacher of God's Word may be furnish'd himself with all Divine Knowledg, and be able to instruct others in all Parts of their Duty. By which we see something of the Usefulness and Benefit of the Holy Scriptures, which were written for our Learning, to instruct us both in our Work and in our Wages, to reveal to us the Mind and Will of God, and to shew us the way in which we are to go. So that we are not left to the blind and uncertain Conduct of Nature, or to grope out our way in the dark ; but God is pleas'd to give us a Light from Heaven, to direct us in our way thither, even his Holy Word to be a Light unto our Feet, and a Lanthorn to our Paths. And this will lead me to the

Third Thing to be consider'd, viz. the End and Design of the Holy Scriptures, deliver'd in these words, *That we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope*. Where by Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, we are to understand that Patience which is taught, and that Comfort which is administer'd to us by God's Holy Word ; both which give us well-grounded Hopes of Mercy and Salvation

vation in Jesus Christ : for the Holy Scriptures give us the best Arguments for Patience in all Conditions, and administer the highest Cordials in all Afflictions, by shewing us the Love of God in them all, and that the end of them will be everlasting Life.

To this the Apostle, in the next words, subjoins this Prayer ; *Now the God of Patience and Consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another in Jesus Christ* : meaning, that God, who had shew'd so much Patience and Consolation towards them, would give them Grace to do the like to one another, to join together in the Unity of Faith and Charity, according to the Precept and Example of Jesus Christ ; *That they may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And because there were at that time great Feuds and Animosities between the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, the one maligning and separating from the other, the Apostle exhorts them, in the next Verse, to *receive one another* into the same Fellowship and Communion, *as Christ also receiv'd us to the Glory of God.*

The *Jews*, at that time, boasted of their antient Privileges, that they were God's peculiar People, to whom appertain'd the Adoption, the giving of the Law, and the Promises, whose were the Fathers, of whom as concerning the Flesh Christ came ; and so despis'd the *Gentiles*, as Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Israel*, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise.

The *Gentiles*, on the other hand, being newly admitted into Christ's Church by Baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost, contemn'd the *Jews* as Persons cast out of Favour, and look'd upon themselves as the only Persons receiv'd into it ; by which means there was a great Enmity and Variance between them.

Now the Apostle, to heal this Breach, tells them, that God had receiv'd them both, and united them into one Flock ; and therefore they ought to receive one another, and to unite in his Worship and Service, and thereby to glorify God together.

This he confirms and moves them to from the Holy Scriptures, telling the *Gentiles*, in the next Verse, that *Christ was the Minister of Circumcision to the Jews, for the Truth of God, to confirm the Promises made unto the Fathers* ; meaning, that Christ came first to the *Jews*, and preach'd unto them, by *Moses* and the Prophets, the Truths of

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God, making good the Promises made of old to them, beyond all other People. He likewise tells the *Jews*, in the following words, *That the Gentiles too might glorify God, for the Mercy shew'd to them*, in making Christ an Instrument of his Mercy to them; and so occasion is given them of magnifying his Name, as it is written in the Book of Psalms, *For this cause I will confess thee among the Gentiles, and sing Praises unto thy Name*; Psal. 18. 49. And again he saith, *Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his People*, Deut. 32. 43. where the *Gentiles* are bid to join with the *Jews* in blessing and praising God. To the same purpose is that of the Psalmist, *Praise the Lord all ye Gentiles, and laud him all ye People*; Psal. 117. 1. And again *Isaias* saith, *There shall be a Root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust*. This Place is quoted out of *Isa. 11. 10.* where Christ, *the Root of Jesse, is said to stand for an Ensign or Standard of the People, and that to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his Rest shall be glorious*. By which we see what pains the Apostle seems to take to shew the Mercy of God, extended both to *Jew* and *Gentile*, and thereby convince them, that they ought not to despise, condemn, or separate from one another, but to unite together in the Service of God; for the Partition-Wall between them is now broken down, and they are all one in Christ Jesus, being equally admitted to the Privileges of the Temple, and so become one Flock and one Fold, under the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls: which should teach them not to wander or go into Parties and Factions, but to keep together, and with one Mind and one Mouth, or with one Heart and one Consent, to glorify God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: which that they might be the better enabled to do, the Apostle adds, in the Close, this hearty and affectionate Prayer; *Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope, thro the Power of the Holy Ghost*: that is, that God, on whom all our Hopes and Trust are founded, would fill their Hearts with Joy and Peace, with Union and Concord in the Christian Faith, that so all the Hopes and Promises of the Gospel may be multiply'd upon them in great abundance, thro the working of God's Holy Spirit in them.

Thus I have briefly open'd to you the Sense of this Day's Epistle, in which we have the Antiquity, the Authority,
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and the Usefulness of the Holy Scriptures, which were written aforetime, and contain the Prophecies and Promises of a Saviour in the Old Testament, and the actual Appearance and Accomplishment of them in the New, together with the happy Union of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in the Faith and Hope of Salvation by Jesus Christ: all which things were written for our Learning, that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

The Use that we are to make of it, is hinted to us in the Collect for this Day; to wit, that we should hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these Holy Scriptures, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life.

1. Then, we are exhorted diligently to *hear* the Holy Scriptures, as they are read and expounded to us; for *Faith comes by hearing* (saith the Apostle) *and hearing by the Word of God: How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14, 17. He that refuses to hear can never learn; and they that turn the deaf Ear to God's Word, will never be wise unto Salvation. *Solomon* therefore often calls upon us to *hearken unto Wisdom, and to give ear to Instruction*. The Prophet *Isaiah* encourages to it with the hopes of Salvation, saying, *Hear, and your Souls shall live*. *St. James* bids us to *be swift to hear*, as the speediest way to Knowledge and Understanding; and to *receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word, that is able to save our Souls*; Jam. 1. 19, 21. *St. Peter* wills us, as *new-born Babes*, to *desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*; 1 Pet. 2. 2. to suck in God's Word with as eager an Appetite, as a Child does its Mother's Milk, in order to our Growth in Grace and Knowledge. And the Angel's Call to the Churches of *Asia*, was, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches*. All which shews the hearing of the Scriptures to be a necessary Duty of all Christians, and justly reproves the Backwardness of such as will not move over the Threshold to hear the Word of God. But because Hearing supposes Reading, we are,

2. Call'd upon to *read* the Holy Scriptures. *Give Attendance to Reading*, saith *St. Paul* to *Timothy*, 1 Tim. 4. 13. When a certain Lawyer came to our Saviour, and said unto him, *Master, what must I do to inherit eternal Life?* he presently ask'd him, *What is written in the Law, how readest thou?* Luke 10. 26. implying, that reading the Scriptures

was necessary to the knowing and doing the Will of God, and to be sav'd by him. And when the young Man in the Gospel came to him with the like Question, he sent him to the Law and the Prophets, to read there the Words of eternal Life. And indeed the Scriptures are the Book of Life, by which alone we can be taught to attain to it: *We have a sure Word of Prophecy* (saith St. Peter) *to which we shall do well to take heed*, by reading and remembring of it; for St. John pronounces those *Blessed, that read and hear the Words of this Prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein, for the time is at hand*: Rev. i. 3. By which we see the necessity of frequent reading the Word of God, to imprint it on our Minds, and to have it ready for our use, as occasion shall require. Furthermore, we learn hence the Injustice and Cruelty of those that keep the Bible from the People, by locking it up in a Language unknown to them, and hiding from them the Words of eternal Life: as also the extreme Folly and Danger of such who neglect the reading of God's Word, or prefer vain, empty, and frothy Books before it.

3. We are here put in mind not only to hear and read, but to *mark* and observe the Holy Scriptures: for the bare hearing and reading of them are not sufficient to the Ends of Salvation, for that will make them no better than a dead Letter, which hath no Life or Efficacy at all in it; 'tis the well weighing and considering of the Scriptures, that puts all the Virtue and Energy into them. A slight perfunctory Hearer of God's Word lets it pass away as a Tale that is told, without leaving any Impression behind it; and a careless cursory Reader can reap no Comfort or Benefit at all by it: it must get into the Head, and sink down into the Heart, before it can have its due Effect upon us. And indeed the Matters contain'd in the Holy Scriptures are of so great Use, and of so mighty Importance to us, that they very well deserve to be diligently mark'd and observ'd by us: they treat of things that concern our Life, and the eternal Well-being of our Souls; and therefore are to be heard with Attention, and heeded with the greatest Intention of Mind: they are the Word of God, our great Master and Maker, and they deliver his Mind and Will concerning us; and it must argue a great Contempt of the Author, and the things contain'd in this Book, not to think them worthy of our Regard or Consideration. It will become us therefore to look upon the Holy Scriptures, not as
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the Word of Man, but of God, and so to mark and attend to them accordingly.

4. We are directed here not only to mark, but to *learn* the Holy Scriptures; that is, to search into the true Sense and Meaning of them, to understand them aright, and to make a good use of them; for the Apostle tells us of some that *wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction*: And we have known some who have perverted them to the Destruction of Kingdoms, to the maintaining of Errors, Heresies, Schisms, and Seditions, and have turn'd the Gospel of Peace into a Trumpet of War and Rebellion. Not that the Scriptures give any Countenance or Encouragement to these things, but that Mens Prejudices and corrupt Designs either find or bring them there; and therefore we are to study and search the Scriptures, and as the noble *Bereans* did with the Apostles Doctrine, examine whether things were so, *Acts 17. 11.* Since the Scriptures were written for our Learning, let us learn to know and use them aright, lest we miss of Scripture even in the Scripture, and turn the Word of Truth into Error and Fable; and so instead of being wise unto Salvation, we prove Fools and Truants to our own Destruction, being carry'd about with every Wind of Doctrine, and falling from our own Stedfastness.

Lastly, We are bid not only to learn, but inwardly to digest the Holy Scriptures, and this is to be done by serious Study and Meditation. The Word of God is often call'd the Food of the Soul, that cherishes it to eternal Life. Now as Food must be taken in and digested, before it can turn into the Substance and Nourishment of the Body; so the Word must be receiv'd into the Heart, and thorowly ponder'd and digested there, before it can tend to the Comfort and Refreshment of the Soul. We read of holy *Job*, that he prefer'd the Word of God before his *appointed Food*: And of *David*, that he made it his Meditation Day and Night. In like manner we pray in the Collect for this Day, that we may have Grace to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures, which were writ for our Learning; and by thus receiving the ingrafted Word, 'twill be able to save our Souls. All that remains, is, to bless God for giving us the Holy Scriptures, which shew us the plain Path-way to Heaven, and to endeavour to walk by the Light and Directions of them in the whole Course of our Lives; so will they guide us by God's Grace here, and at last bring us to Glory.



DISCOURSE IV.

The GOSPEL for the Second Sunday in *Advent*.

St. Luke xxi. 25——34.

And there shall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth, Distress of Nations, with Perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the Earth, &c.

THIS Season of *Advent* puts us in mind of a double Coming of Christ: the first is, His Coming as a Saviour, which was in great Humility; of which we have spoken in the foregoing Discourses: The second is, His Coming as a Judg, which will be in Power and great Glory; and of this I am now to speak from the Gospel for this Day, which treats of Christ's second Coming to Judgment: An excellent Preparative for the approaching Remembrance of his first Coming. For if we welcome him as a Saviour, we need not fear him as a Judg; and if we are prepar'd for his Judgment, we may rejoice at his Nativity. From the Gospel then for this Day, I must shew,

First, The Certainty of Christ's Second Coming.

Secondly, The Signs and the Forerunners of it.

Thirdly, The Manner and Circumstances of it. And,

Fourthly, The End and Design of it. Of each of which distinctly. And,

First, Of the Certainty of his Second Coming. This is here plainly suppos'd, and in sundry other places more plainly express'd. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his Angels; Jude, ver. 14. Daniel, in his Vision, saw
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Gospel for the second Sunday in Advent. 27

one like the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven; Dan. 7. 13, 14. St. Matthew mentions his coming in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels; Matth. 25. 31. Christ himself said to his Disciples more than once, I go away, and come again to you: and 'twas often in their mouths, He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; Heb. 10. 37. David prophesied of him, that he should make the Clouds his Chariot, and come flying upon the Wings of the Wind; Psal. 104. 3. Accordingly the Angels told the Men of Galilee, That the same Jesus whom they saw taken up in a Cloud to Heaven, should come again in like manner, as they had seen him taken up; Acts 1. 11. All which places, and many more that might be cited to that purpose, evidently prove his second Coming. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the Signs and Tokens that shall go before it, and usher it in; for before Christ's actual appearing, he will give the drousy World warning by many fearful Signs and Wonders. So the first Words of the Gospel tell us: There shall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and on the Earth, Distress of Nations, &c. Where the Signs that will presage this great and terrible Day, will be partly in the Heavens, and partly in the Earth: So the Prophecy of Joel foretold, Chap. 2. 30, 31. I will shew Wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth Blood and Fire, and Pillars of Smoak; the Sun shall be turn'd into Darknes, and the Moon into Blood. To fulfil which Prophecy, Christ himself declares, that before that Day come, The Sun shall be darkned, and the Moon shall not give its Light, and the Stars of Heaven shall fall, and the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken; and then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man: Matth. 24. 29, 30. So that the Signs in the Sun, mention'd here by St. Luke, will be Eclipses and Darknes; the Signs in the Moon, will be likewise Darknes and Blood, and Pillars of Smoak; the Signs in the Stars, will be their shooting and falling: and generally all the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken. The Signs in the Earth, will be great Earthquakes in divers Places, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sights. In the Sea, there will be the Roaring of Waves, and a fearful Noise of tumbling Waters: upon the Earth, there will be Distress of Nations, with great Perplexity, Mens Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the Earth. Now all,
or

or most of these Signs went before, and presaged the Destruction of *Jerusalem* which soon follow'd after, and were fulfilled in it. So the Words in the close of this Gospel testify; *Verily, I say unto you, this Generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled*: meaning, that all those sad Symptoms should be accomplish'd in the speedy and fatal Overthrow of that City; which is so sure and inevitable, that *Heaven and Earth shall sooner pass away*, than the Words spoken of it fail or pass away unfulfilled. But tho those portentous Signs and Wonders were literally spoken, and immediately fulfill'd in the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; yet did they look farther, and were so many Typical Representations of the general Judgment, and prefigur'd the Coming of that great and terrible Day of the Lord: for so the next Words tell us, *And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a Cloud with Power and great Glory*; that is, when those fearful Symptoms shall appear upon the Face of the Universe, then shall the Son of God appear in his Glory, to summon all the Inhabitants of the Earth to come, before him, to hear and receive their everlasting Doom. But tho this will be a terrible Day indeed to the Wicked, who have disobey'd and despis'd him; tho the Sinners in *Zion* may be justly afraid, and Fearfulness may surprize the Hypocrite, yet will it be a joyful Day to the Righteous, and to all such as have look'd and prepar'd for his Coming: For so the following Words declare, *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your Heads; for your Redemption draweth nigh*. Comfortable words indeed, and sound forth nothing but Joy and Blessedness! Tho you are now cast down, and hang down your Heads with Sorrow under the Troubles of this Life, yet then you will be bid to look up, and to lift up your Heads with chearfulness, for your Redemption draweth nigh: your Freedom from the Captivity of Sin and Satan, and the Time of inflating you into the glorious Liberty and Privileges of the Sons of God, will then be at hand. And to confirm you in the Belief and Hopes hereof, he illustrates it in the following Verses by a Parable; for 'tis said, *He spake to them a Parable, Behold the Fig-Tree and all other Trees, when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that Summer is now nigh at hand*: So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand. If the Fruits of Righteousness appear, conclude that the Winter of Affliction is over, and the Summer

Gospel for the second Sunday in Advent. 29

mer or Sunshine of Prosperity draweth near. Thus we see both the Certainty, and likewise the Signs and Symptoms of Christ's Second Coming. From whence I proceed,

Thirdly, To consider the Manner and Circumstances of his Coming: And that we are here told will be *with Power and great Glory*. His first Appearance was mean, and in a Dress of Humility and Poverty, because he then came to suffer, and by his Death to purchase a Kingdom for us: But his next Appearance will be glorious, and attended with Pomp and Magnificence; because he then comes to instate us in it, and to take us to reign with him for ever in Glory. And here the

1st Thing to be observ'd, is, the Place from whence he is to come; and that is, from Heaven, the Seat of his Residence, *till the time of the Restitution of all Things*, Acts 3. 21. When the Son of God had finish'd the Work which his Father gave him to do upon Earth, he did in a visible and triumphant manner ascend up into Heaven; where, as a Reward of his Sufferings, his human Nature was exalted to the high Honour of the Right Hand of God, there to sit and reign with him, till the last and great Day of the Consummation of all things; at which time he will rise from his Imperial Throne in Heaven, and descend again upon Earth, to visit these lower Regions. So the Apostle tells us, *He will descend from Heaven with a Shout*, 1 Thess. 4. 16. And elsewhere, *He shall be reveal'd from Heaven with his mighty Angels*, 2 Thess. 1. 17.

2^{dly}, But how will Christ descend from thence? Why that, this Gospel here tells us; ye shall see the Son of Man *coming in a Cloud*, with Power and great Glory. A Cloud was a Vehicle to carry him up, and a Cloud will be the Chariot to bring him down. So the Angel told the Men of Galilee in that forecited place, *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into Heaven*; that is, as a Cloud receiv'd him out of sight, so a Cloud shall bring him into sight again. So we read in St. Matthew, Chap. 26. 64. *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the Right Hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven*. Daniel foresaw and foretold this, that the Son of Man shall come in the Clouds of Heaven, Dan. 7. 13. From this Prophecy the Jews generally expect the Coming of the Messias in this manner: And for this reason they reject Christ
and

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and say the Messias is not yet come, because they never saw him coming in the Clouds of Heaven ; by an unhappy Mistake applying that to the First, which is meant only of his Second Coming. His first Coming was to be through a Virgin's Womb, as the Prophecies of the Old Testament plainly declare ; so that his coming in the Clouds of Heaven, can be meant only of his Second Coming : and so 'tis always understood in the New Testament. But,

3dly, What is that *Power and great Glory*, in which 'tis said he will come ? By the Power, is meant that universal Empire and Dominion he shall exercise over all Creatures ; for all Power will be his both in Heaven and Earth, by which he will command the whole Heavenly Host, and all things on Earth shall obey and be subject to him. In this Plenitude of Power will his Coming be. As for his Glory, that will out-shine the Sun, and darken all the Lights of Heaven with his surpassing Brightness. We read, that at his Transfiguration on Mount *Tabor*, he dazzled the Eyes of his Disciples with the Splendor of his Presence ; for *his Face shined as the Sun, and his Garments were white as the Light*, Matth. 17. 2. But this was but a faint Light to that exceeding Lustre he will appear in at his Second Coming, when his Eyes will sparkle with Beams of Majesty, and his Face shine with a far more dazzling Glory : for 'tis said, he will come in *the Glory of his Father* ; by which is meant, that *Shechinah*, or flaming Fire, in which he appear'd on Mount *Sinai* at the Delivery of the Law, call'd there *the Glory of the Lord* ; which was so bright and illustrious, that neither *Moses* nor the People were able to bear it : and yet this will be far more glorious, as design'd to adorn a far more glorious Solemnity. But,

4thly, With what Retinue or Equipage will he come ? Why, this Christ himself tells us, *Luke* 9. 28. that he *shall come in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and of the Holy Angels*. *Daniel's* Prophecy was, that a thousand thousand should minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand should stand before him ; *Dan.* 7. 10. This in the New Testament is call'd an innumerable Company of *Angels*, *Heb.* 12. 22. All which are to attend him in this Progress ; for so we read, that he *shall come in his Glory, and all his holy Angels with him*, Matth. 25. 31. And *St. Paul* tells us, that he *shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels*, 2 *Thess.* 1. 7. And this their coming with him shall not be (as a learned Divine tells us) only for Show and Pomp, but

but as the Scriptures declare, they shall minister to him in that great Transaction; for these, with an Arch-Angel in the Head of them, shall sound a Trumpet, and thereby awaken all that sleep in the Grave to arise and come before him. So St. Paul acquaints us, *1 Thess. 4. 16.* that *the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Arch-Angel, and the Trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Our Saviour himself tells us, *Matth. 24. 31.* that at his coming on the Clouds of Heaven, *He will send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet, and they shall gather his Elect from the four Winds, from one end of the Heavens to the other.*

But where, or to what Place will this his Second Coming be? Why that, as the Scripture hath reveal'd it to us, will be *in the Air*; where he will fix his Throne to be visible to all the Inhabitants of the Earth, who shall be carry'd up by the Angels into the Clouds to him: for so we read, that when Christ shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Arch-Angel and the Trump of God, *then they that are alive and remain, shall be caught up in the Clouds, together with them that shall be then raised from the Dead, to meet the Lord in the Air; 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.* There will he fix his Seat, to manifest his Victory over the Devil, who is stiled *the Prince of the Power of the Air*; and likewise over all his Angels, Principalities, and Powers, who have there domineer'd and tyranniz'd over this wretched World. Thus I have briefly shew'd you (as far as the Holy Scriptures direct) the Manner and Circumstances of Christ's Second Coming. It remains that I proceed, in the last place, to consider,

Fourthly, The Great End and Design of it. And that is, to judg the World, and all in it, according to their Works. His first Coming was to purchase and procure Salvation, and to make Offers and Tenders of it unto all Mankind; his second Coming will be to enquire into their Acceptance or Refusal of this Salvation, and to sentence them accordingly. They who have accepted and performed the Terms of it, shall be made joyful Partakers of this Salvation, and be crown'd with everlasting Life; they who have neglected or rejected the Conditions of it, shall be for ever depriv'd of it, and doom'd to everlasting Death.

That

That there will be such a Day of General Judgment, when all Men shall be summon'd to appear before this Tribunal, the Holy Scripture is every where full and express: *'Tis appointed to all Men once to die, (saith the Apostle) and after that to come to Judgment, Heb. 9. 27.* Where Judgment is made as certain as Death, both being settled by a divine and irreversibile Decree; only with this difference, we shall die but once, but shall be judged to Eternity. That Christ shall come at the last Day to be the Judg, is no less clearly settled and reveal'd; for God hath appointed a Day in which he will judg the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; that is, by the Man Christ Jesus, of which he hath given Assurance by raising him from the Dead, Acts 17. 31. The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son; John 5. 22. So that we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the Body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil; 2 Cor. 5. 10.

The things for which Christ will judg us at that time, will be all that hath been done by us; and so our Thoughts, Words, and Actions will come under the Scrutiny and Examination of that Day. And likewise all things that have been intrusted with us, and so all the Talents of Time, Health, Wealth, Wisdom, Honour, Power, and the like, will be then reckon'd for, according to the Measure and Proportion of them that we have receiv'd.

The Rule by which he will then judg us, will be the Gospel: So Christ himself tells us, *The Words that I have spoken unto you, the same shall judg you at the last Day; John 12. 48.* And St. Paul declares the same, *In that day God shall judg the Secrets of Mens Hearts by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel; Rom. 2. 16.* And the Result of all will be, that every one, upon a fair hearing or trial, shall receive his Sentence according to his Works; *they that have done Good, shall receive the blessed Sentence of Eternal Life, and they that have done Evil, shall hear the black Sentence of Damnation; as we read, John 5. 29.* Thus we see the Certainty, the Manner, and the End of Christ's second Coming. From all which, I shall briefly infer these three or four Lessons.

And, 1st, from the Certainty of his coming again to Judgment, we may learn to fit and prepare our selves for it, lest that Day come upon us unawares, and find us unprepar'd: let us not, with the foolish Virgins, be unpro-
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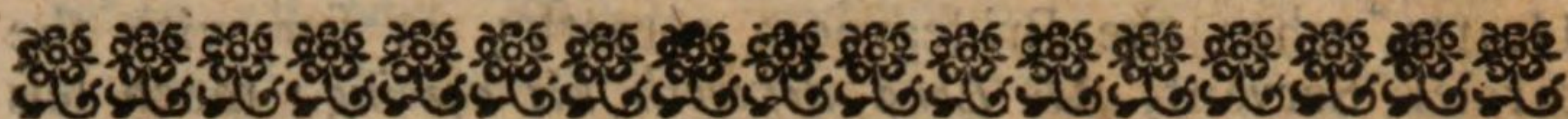
vided with *Oil in our Lamps*; that is, with Grace in our Hearts, when the Bridegroom cometh; or say with the careless Servant, *My Lord delayeth his coming*: much less ask with the Scoffers, *Where is the Promise of his coming?* But rather, let us make ready to meet him; and since we know and look for these things, say with the Apostle, *What manner of Men ought we to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness?*

2dly, From Christ's being the Judg, let all good Christians look up and lift up their Heads, for their Redemption draweth nigh. He who was their Redeemer, and lov'd them so well as to die for them, will sure be their merciful Judg, and stand by them at that last and great Hour.

3dly, Christ's coming to judg the World, speaks nothing but Dread and Terror to all wicked and ungodly Men; for what can they look for from him, whom they have all their Life-time despis'd and trod under foot, but a fearful *Expectation of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God?* How can they hope to be sav'd by his Blood, which they have all along slighted, and counted as an unholy thing? In a word, how can they think to escape, who have neglected and contemned *so great Salvation?*

4thly, From the approaching of a future Judgment, we may learn to solve all the Riddles of Providence, concerning the Prosperity of the Wicked, and the Adversities of good Men; for there is a time coming, when these things shall be set right, at which time afflicted Vertue shall be crown'd with Glory, and prosperous Wickedness be cloth'd with endless Shame and Confusion of Face.

Lastly, If Christ be coming again to judg the World, then let us *judg nothing before the Time, until the Lord come.* To judg or censure our Brother, is to forestal the Day of Judgment, and to usurp our Saviour's Office; and therefore the Apostle might well ask such bold Censurers, *Who art thou that judgest another's Servant? to his own Master he stands or falls.* If we will needs be judging, let us judg and condemn our selves now, that we may not be judged, but acquitted at the last Day.



DISCOURSE V.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday in *Advent*.

1 Cor. iv. 1—6.

Let a Man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover, it is requir'd in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful; but with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment, &c.

THE Collect for this Day, minds us of Christ's first Coming in the Flesh; and likewise of his second Coming to Judgment: of both which I have before treated. That which is here added, is, that there was a Messenger to prepare his way for the one; and that there are Ministers and Stewards still to make ready his way for the other: together with a Prayer, that as the former faithfully discharg'd his Office at his first Coming, so the latter may do theirs at his second; that when that time comes, we may be found an acceptable People in his sight.

Who that first Messenger was, and who the Ministers and Stewards now are, and how they are to do their Office in preparing the way of the Lord, is the Matter now to be consider'd.

The Epistle for the Day gives us some account of the latter, and the Gospel of the former; both which are therefore to be consider'd.

And First, The Epistle for the Day, of which I am now to speak, acquaints us with the Ministers and Stewards, that are to make ready the way for Christ's second Coming. And it begins thus; *Let a Man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover, it is requir'd in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.* Where we may observe,

First,

First, The Office and Dignity of the Clergy, imply'd in the Titles of the *Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.*

Secondly, The People's Duty towards them, which is, *so to account of them.*

Thirdly, The Ministers Duty, which is to be found faithful. The following part of the Epistle infers from hence these three Things:

I. The Proneness of some Men to judg and censure the Ministers of Christ; for *St. Paul* here mentions the *Corinthians* judging of him.

II. The little regard that is to be had of such Censures: so he here tells them, *With me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of Man's Judgment.*

III. A Caution or Counsel against all such rash and unjust Judgment; *Therefore judg nothing before the time, until the Lord come, &c.*

These are the principal Things contain'd in this Epistle; of which particularly. And

First, of the Office and Dignity of the Clergy, imply'd in the two Titles of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.

The 1st Great Title here given to them, is that of the *Ministers of Christ*; and that because they are ordain'd by Christ, and derive their Authority and Commission from him. And as they who are intrusted with any Power under a King, are stil'd the King's Ministers, so they who are appointed by Christ to instruct and govern his Church under him, are properly call'd *Christ's Ministers*. And that they are thus commission'd by him, the Holy Scriptures plainly declare: for after his Resurrection he appear'd to the Apostles, and breathing on them the Holy Ghost, said unto them, *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you*, John 20. 21, 22. And likewise gave them Authority to ordain others to succeed them, promising to be with them to the end of the World, Mat. 28. Thus Christ by a Succession of Bishops and Pastors settled in the Church by his own Authority, still continues to teach and rule it to this Day; and all they that can thus derive their Commission by a due and regular Ordination from those Hands, are truly and properly said to be the Ministers of Christ.

The other Title here given to them, is, *the Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. By the *Mysteries of God*, we are to understand the great Truths of the Gospel, or the Revelation of the Way and Means contriv'd by the Wisdom and Goodness of God for Man's Salvation; which for the Excellency, Weight, and seeming Difficulty of them, are often call'd by the Name of Mysteries. Thus the Incarnation of Christ, the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the like, are rank'd among the Mysteries of God, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. & *Col.* 2. 2. To be Stewards of these Mysteries of God, is to be authoriz'd by him to preach and publish these great Truths unto the People, to dispense the Riches of Divine Grace reveal'd in the Gospel, and as Stewards in God's House to give to every one their Portion in due season. So *St. Paul* tells us, that *God hath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation, and committed to us the Word of Peace, making us Ambassadors for Christ, to beseech Men in his stead to be reconcil'd unto God*; 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19. Now all such as are lawfully call'd to, and intrusted with these things, are truly the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Both which shew us the Honour and Dignity of the Sacred Function: for the Honour of any Service proceeds partly from the Greatness of the Master, and partly from the Goodness of the Work about which we are employ'd. Now to serve Christ, is to serve a higher and better Master than all the Princes or Potentates in the World; and to be a Steward in his House, to dispense his Favours, is by far the noblest Employment upon Earth, and comes nearest to the Work and Business of the holy Angels in Heaven: And therefore this double Title renders them worthy of double Honour. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the People's Duty towards them; which is, so to account of them, and to respect them accordingly. Let a Man so account of us, as of the *Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. Let a Man, that is, let every Man; so the indefinite Expression signifies, let all Men so account of us. Neither is this spoken only by way of Permission, as a matter indifferent, which they may do or let alone; but by way of Command, as a matter of Duty, which they ought or must do: All and every Man must account of us, as the *Ministers of Christ*, not the Ministers of the People; and as the *Stewards of God*, not the
 Servants

Epistle for the third Sunday in Advent. 37

Servants of Men. Learned Men have observ'd on this place, that the Priests or Men in Holy Orders are in Scripture always stil'd *the Ministers of God, the Ministers of Christ, the Ministers of the New Testament, the Ministers of the Gospel, the Ministers of Christ's Church, the Stewards of the House and Mysteries of God*, and the like; but never the Ministers of the People, or Stewards and Servants of Men: which was done to preserve the Honour and Veneration due to God and his Ministers. Whereas the saying and thinking otherwise, hath led many into great Mistakes, and occasion'd too great a Contempt of God and his Ministers; as if the People were their Masters, and might chuse whom they please, and give them what they think fit: which hath brought matters in the Church to great Confusion. To prevent which, the Apostle here requires all Men to account of them as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God, to keep up the Honour and Esteem that is due to them: for tho as they stand related to God, and are sent by him, they are properly his Servants and Ministers, yet with relation to the People, they are their Masters and Teachers. The Shepherd, we know, is not the Servant, but the Guide and Governour of the Sheep; even so, spiritual Pastors are not so much the Ministers, as the Masters, Leaders, and Overseers of the Flock committed to their charge: and as such, God hath appointed them their Work, and allotted them their Wages, for he reserv'd the tenth part of all Men's Substance to himself, for the Service of the Altar, antecedent to all human Laws about it; of which there had been no need, if Men had paid that due Obedience to the Laws of God as they ought. So that 'tis not common Theft only, but Sacrilege, to rob his Ministers of it, and will be attended with the worst and heaviest of Curses.

I have spoken the more of this, to rectify a common Error and Abuse of this Matter, and to convince Men of the Divine Right both of the Ministry and its Maintenance. From whence I proceed,

Thirdly, From the People's Duty, to the Ministers Duty to them; and that is, Fidelity in the discharge of their Office: *Moreover, it is requir'd in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.* This Charge was given to them, Acts 20. 28. *Take heed unto your selves, and to the Flock of Christ, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed*

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the Church of God, which he hath purchas'd with his own Blood. This is the great End and Business of their Ministry, to which they will do well to take heed, that they may answer it with Joy to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls and receive the Reward of so doing. As *Ministers of Christ*, they are to feed the Flock with sound Doctrine, and go before them by a pious Example. As *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, they are to deal out the Bread of Life, and give every one their Meat in due season; administering Milk to Babes, and stronger Meats to well-grown Christians, that they may be able to give a good account of their Stewardship, and be admitted into their Master's Joy. More particularly, they are to prepare the People for the second Coming of their Lord to Judgment, by turning the Hearts of the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just, that they may be found an acceptable People in the sight of God at that last and great Day.

This is the First Part of this Epistle for the Day, which concerns our Preparation for the great and final Judgment of God, shewing how both Ministers and People may and ought daily to expect and make ready for it.

The Second Part concerns the rash Judgment and Censures of Men here in this Life; shewing, how we may endeavour either wisely to escape, or patiently to bear Man's Judgment at present, in hopes of being clear'd and justify'd in the future Judgment of God. And here we may observe,

I, The too great Proneness of some Men to judg and censure the Ministers of Christ. The great Apostle St. Paul found and felt something of this, intimating to us, that he was judg'd by these *Corinthians*, and was fallen under Man's Judgment; for he declares in the next Verse, *To me it is a very small thing to be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment*; implying, that so he was, and that the Tongue of Slander and Censure was let loose upon him: which made him say, that he went *thro good Report and bad Report*; for with some he was a *Deceiver*, and with others *true*, 2 Cor. 6. 8. He found that both his Person and Ministry were fallen into Contempt with the *Corinthians*, by the cunning Arts of false and corrupt Teachers, that were crept in among them: And among other *Perils* that environ'd him, he tells us, he was in *Perils by false Brethren*, who

who sought falsely to accuse and condemn him. Neither was it much better with him among the *Galatians*, where he found some *his Enemies*, merely for *telling them the truth*. And if so eminent a Saint and Apostle as *St. Paul* could not escape the Lash of Censure, no wonder if inferior Persons have their share in it. Yea, we find our Saviour himself suffering under the private and publick Judgment of wicked Men: for he was censur'd for *a Glutton, a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; and after accus'd, condemn'd, and crucify'd by them. Now the Disciple is not above his Lord; and if they thus traduc'd the Lord of Glory, we may well enough think, they will not spare his Ministers. Thus we see the Proneness of some Men to judg and censure their Betters: and this proceeds either from Pride, which seeks to blacken others, to make their own Reputation shine the brighter; or from Envy, which cannot bear the Lustre of others Merits; or Interest, which prompts Men to build their own Fortunes upon the Ruin of their Neighbours.

But what was *St. Paul's* Opinion or Carriage under their hard Censures? Why the Answer to that will lead me to the

Next Thing to be observ'd, which was the little regard that is to be shew'd to all such Reproaches and Censures: *With me* (saith the Apostle) *it is a small thing to be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment*. 'Tis a thing of very small moment or consequence, yea, even a matter of nothing; for they having no Power or Right of judging, their Sentence must be vain and frivolous: And so *St. Paul* here reckon'd it, intimating to them, that tho he, as a Minister of Christ, and Steward of holy Mysteries, might in something fail of his Duty, and so deserve blame; yet he was not to be judg'd of them, or of Men, that had no Authority for so doing: no, saith he, nor yet by my own self I judg not what degree of Honour or Blame I may be worthy of, but leave that to him who judgeth righteously; *for I know nothing by my self* (saith he) *yet am I not thereby justify'd*; i. e. Tho I cannot charge my self with any great fault in the execution of my Office, yet is not this the clearing or justifying of me: Only God, that seeth and knoweth all things, must do that; for *he that judgeth me is the Lord*, none else have any Authority or Ability to do it; and therefore, saith he, I have little reason to value

Mens Judgment, how candid or cruel soever it may be, since for want of Authority it is utterly void and invalid of it self. By which the Apostle teaches us, not to fear or regard the rash Censures or Sentence of the World; but having the Testimony of a good Conscience, to make light of the sinister Judgment and Constructions of Men. Calumnies and Accusations despis'd, often vanish and die away; whereas they are commonly kept alive, and sting too by Resentment: for Reproaches only stick and wound the guilty Breast, but fly off and leave no Impression upon a vertuous Mind; which should teach us to make no account of the Censures of others, nor to be too free of our own. And this will lead me,

Lastly, To the Caution or Counsel given in the Close of this Epistle, *Therefore judg nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of Darkness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Heart; and then shall every Man have praise of God.*

Judg nothing, for all Judgment is God's, and none else can have any right of judging without him: *He is the Judg of all the Earth*, saith the Psalmist, *Psal. 94. 2.* He made all Men, and so hath the sole Right of judging them, and none may presume to judg his Creatures; which made the Apostle ask the Question, *Who art thou that judgest another's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth;* Rom. 14. 4. Again,

Judg nothing, neither Mens Thoughts, which are out of our reach; nor Mens Words or Actions, which fall not under our Judgment, any otherwise than to think, and speak, and hope the best, and to make the fairest and mildest Construction of them: much less are we to judg of their final State and Condition, which is to be determin'd by God only. Furthermore, *judg nothing before the time*, because *God hath appointed a Day, wherein he will judg the World in Righteousness*; and for any to do it before, is to take God's Work out of his hand, and to forestal the Day of Judgment, which is to be left to him, and to be put off *until the Lord come*. But yet this doth not condemn the Office of a Judg, even in this World, or render earthly Magistrates either unnecessary or unlawful; for these are appointed by God, and act by his Command and Authority: They are God's Ministers and Vicegerents upon Earth to determine Mens Rights, and decide their Controversies,

troverfies, while they remain here, and thereby preserve the Peace and Order of the World: They meddle not with Mens future and final State, which is not in their Commiffion, but leave that till the Lord come, to be determin'd by his final Sentence at the laft Day, when he will judg all Men over again, and render to them according to their Works. Then will he *bring to light all the hidden things of Darknefs*, which are not to be known or discover'd here, and *make manifest the fecret Counfels of the Heart*, which are now remov'd from all human Cognizance; *and then fhall every Man have Praise of God*. Not that all Men fhall be then juftify'd and commended, but every one that hath done well fhall have their due Recompence of Reward, and they that have done evil fhall receive their juft Punifhment.

This is briefly the Senfe and Sum of this Day's Epiftle. From whence we may learn,

1. Who are the Officers appointed to make ready the way for Chrift's coming to Judgment; namely, the Minifters and Stewards of Holy Myfteries, who are therefore to be receiv'd and refpected accordingly. We are here bid fo to account of them as of the Minifters of Chrift, and Stewards of the Myfteries of God; and fo to think them worthy of double Honour, as well for his fake to whom they belong, as for the Work's fake about which they are employ'd. Their Calling is the higheft upon Earth, their Employment the nobleft, and their Message the moft honourable; they are the Ambaffadors of Chrift, fent to treat with Men about their everlafting Peace and Salvation. And as a Prince reckons himfelf honour'd or affronted in the good or bad Ufage of his Ambaffadors, fo Chrift accounts himfelf refpected or despis'd in the well or ill Treatment of his Minifters: and therefore the Apoftle gives a ftrict Charge to all People, to *know them that are over them in the Lord, and admonifh them, and to efteem them very highly in love for their Work's fake*; 1 Theff. 5. 13. And the Author to the *Hebrews* exhorts to *obey them that have the Rule over them in the Lord, and fubmit themfelves, for they watch for their Souls, as thofe that muft give account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief*: Heb. 13. 17.

2. If Chrift's Minifters are to make the way ready for his fecond Coming, then we may learn hence to hearken to

to them, and receive their Message: the Words they deliver are from God, and therefore to be receiv'd with all Reverence and Veneration, and to be counted worthy of all Acceptation. As the Ministers and Stewards of God's House are to be faithful in delivering their Master's Will, so are the People to be careful of receiving and observing it: *He that heareth you (saith Christ) heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me:* Luke 10. 16. And dreadful will be the Doom of all such, as shall be found Despisers of God, and of Christ, and of his Holy Ministers.

3. From Christ's Coming to Judgment, we may learn what little regard is to be given to the Judgment or Censures of Men. *To me it is a very small matter (saith the Apostle) to be judg'd of you, or of Man's Judgment.* He laid no manner of stress upon it; for Man's Judgment is many times rash and inconsiderate, either blinded with Passion, or bias'd by Pride, Prejudice, Partiality, and Self-Interest; yea, the Apostle tells us, that he could not trust his own Judgment: *I judg not mine own self,* saith he. For tho he could not charge himself with any Unfaithfulness, but was arm'd with a Conscience of his own Integrity, yet God was greater than his Conscience, and knoweth all things; and therefore none but he was able either to justify or condemn him: and for Men to take upon them to do either, is presumptuous and vain. Wherefore,

Lastly, From what hath been said, let us judg nothing before the time; let us not venture to judg any Person, or cast out the Bolt of hard Speeches or Censures against any; for who made thee a Judg, may be ask'd in all such Cases? but rather let us refer all to the final, just, and impartial Judgment of God, who being their Maker and Preserver, will do all Men right.





DISCOURSE VI.

The G O S P E L for the Third Sunday in *Advent*.

Mat. xi. 2——11.

Now when John had heard in Prison the Works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? &c. to those words, This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my Messenger before thy Face, and he shall prepare thy way before thee.

TH E Epistle for this Day, of which I have spoken, shews us the Ministers or Stewards, that are to make ready the way for Christ's second Coming. The Gospel for the Day, of which I am now to speak, shews us the Messenger that prepar'd the way for his first Coming, and that was *John the Baptist*, of whom 'tis said, in the Close of this Gospel, *This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my Messenger before thy Face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.* Now because 'twas principally for these Words that this Gospel was appointed to be read on this Day, I shall briefly consider what goes before, and then chiefly insist on them, as the proper Subject for this Day's Meditation.

But before I enter upon either, it may be here ask'd, How it was consistent with that great Humility, in which Christ's first Coming is describ'd, to have a Harbinger or Forerunner to go before to prepare for his Reception, which is wont to be a great piece of the Pomp and Gallantry of Princes? In answer to this, if we consider who this Harbinger was, together with the despicable Garb and Equipage in which he came, there could be little reason to expect any thing of Pomp or State to be coming after. The Person imploy'd herein was *John the Baptist*, one train'd up under the austere Discipline and Contempt of the World,

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World, and was accordingly dress'd up in all the Circumstances of outward Meanness and Poverty.

The Place where he appear'd, was not in any Prince's Palace or populous City, but in a solitary Desert, *the Wilderness of Judea*; where he led the most strict and retir'd Life of an Anchorite. His Apparel was not any of that gorgeous Attire that is found in King's Houses, but only *Camel's Hair tied with a leathern Girdle about his Loins*, the usual Garb of a Hermite or Recluse. His Diet was suitable to all the rest, which was not any of the costly Dainties or Delicacies of a Court; but *Locust and wild Honey*, the meanest of all Food; which he receiv'd just as Nature afforded it, without using any of the elaborate Arts to prepare or dress it. Such a mean Harbinger might well enough become such an humble Saviour, who came to take off Mens Hearts from this World, to mind and fit them for a better.

Now this Harbinger was, as the beginning of the Gospel tells us, cast into Prison by *Herod* for his sharp rebuking of him, for keeping *Herodias*, his Brother *Philip's* Wife. And being thus in Prison, and in danger of being put to death, as he afterward was by the Subtilty of *Herodias* and her Daughter; *St. John hearing there the Works of Christ, sent two of his Disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* Which Question could not proceed from any doubt or distrust of *St. John* in the Truth of his Messiahship, for he was both his Harbinger to prepare for him, and his Herald to proclaim him; *He saw and bare record, that he was the Son of God*, John I. 34. And ver. 29. he usher'd him into the World, and with his Finger pointing at him, said, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World!* So that he sent them with this Question, not for himself, who was fully assur'd of the Truth of it, but for the sake of his Disciples: for fearing that their Faith might be shaken by his Death, and they being to preach and publish him, when he was gone, he sent them to him to be confirm'd in the Faith by Arguments from his own Mouth, that they might the better adhere and cleave fast to him. To which end, he bids them *go and shew John again what things ye hear and see; the Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleans'd, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are rais'd up, and the Poor have the Gospel preach'd to them.* All which things he did in their presence for their greater Satisfaction, referring

referring them to the Prophecies of the Old Testament, where these things were promis'd to be done by the Messias at his Coming. So the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, Chap. 35. 4, 5, 6. *Behold, your God will come and save you! then the Eyes of the Blind shall be open'd, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the Lame leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb shall sing, for in the Wilderness shall the Waters break out, and Streams in the Desert.* And Chap. 61. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad Tidings to the Meek, he hath sent me to bind up the Broken-hearted, to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the opening the Prison to them that are bound, and to proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord, &c.* Which things they themselves seeing fulfill'd in him and done by him, they might from thence firmly believe and conclude that he was the Person promis'd, or he that should come: adding withal these Words for their Encouragement, *And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Where to be offended in Christ, is so to spurn and stumble at him, as to take occasion to deny and forsake him; which all that escape, by adhering to him, shall receive all that Blessedness, which by his Merits and Death he hath purchas'd for them.

When our Saviour had said these things to *John's* Disciples, he dismiss'd them, and they departed from him. After which, knowing how the Multitude had flock'd in great numbers to the Wilderness, he ask'd their Opinion concerning *John*, saying in the following Verses, *What went you out into the Wilderness for to see? a Reed shaken with the Wind? Did you resort thither to see how the Wind plays with the Reed, and shakes the Boughs in the Wilderness? sure, so many would not be drawn thither upon so trivial and childish an Errand. But what then went ye out for to see? a Man clothed in soft Rayment? Was it to see a Person array'd in filken and gorgeous Attire? Why that is more vain than the other, for such rich and costly Apparel is not to be found in the Retirements of a Desert, but in the Resorts of Princes Courts; for behold! they that wear soft Clothing are in Kings Houses.* He that withdraws into a Wilderness, affects not fine Clothes, or any worldly Splendor, which is not to be seen there; but is content with coarse Habit and coarser Fare, like *St. John* with Camels Hair, and the Food of Bees. Was it then such a Person that you went out to see? Did you repair thither to see and hear

hear a Prophet? Yea, saith Christ, and more than a Prophet. You went out to John as a Prophet, and so indeed he was, and a great one too, for all the Prophets prophesy'd of him; yea, he was of a pitch beyond all the other Prophets that went before him, being the Herald and Harbinger of Christ: for *this is he, of whom it is written, Behold! I send my Messenger before thy Face, to prepare thy Way before thee.* And now we are come to that principal Passage of this Gospel, for which it is read, and ought to be consider'd this Day. In handling whereof, I must shew,

First, That 'tis written in the Prophets, that such a Messenger should go before, and prepare the Way of the Messias.

Secondly, That St. John was the Person, or he of whom this was written.

Thirdly, I must shew, how or in what manner he prepar'd the Way of the Lord.

First, That there should be such a Messenger or Fore-runner of the Messias, is written and foretold by sundry of the Prophets. The Prophet *Isaiah* stiles him, *The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make strait in the Desert a Highway for our God: Every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low; and the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough Places plain, and the Glory of the Lord shall be reveal'd, and all Flesh shall see it together, for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* Isa. 40. 3, 4, 5. Where this Messenger is represented by a Voice of one proclaiming his Coming, and calling upon the World to make ready for him, by raising of Valleys, and levelling Hills, by rectifying of crooked Paths, and plaining of rough Ways, that all his Way may be plain before him. How that was done, we shall see after.

But the Prophecy of *Malachi*, to which the Words of the Text refer, is yet plainer; for there it is written, *Behold I will send my Messenger before my Face, and he shall prepare the Way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall come suddenly to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Mal. 3. 1. By which Prophecies it is evident, that a Messenger was to go before, and to bring the World Tidings of a Saviour's Coming.

But

But who was this Messenger? Why that, the next Particular will inform us, 'twas *John the Baptist*; *This is he of whom it is written, &c.* Indeed he was design'd and qualify'd for this Office from the beginning, for he was consecrated and fill'd with the *Holy Ghost*, even from his *Mother's Womb*; Luke 1. 15. And was ordain'd to go before the *Son of God*, in the *Spirit and Power of Elias*, to turn the *Hearts of the Fathers unto their Children*, and the *Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just*, to make ready a *People prepar'd for the Lord*; ver. 17. To this end, his Conception, Nativity, and whole Course of Life were extraordinary: his Birth was foretold by an Angel, being beside the common Course of Generation; for his Parents were both past Age, *Elizabeth* barren, and *Zachary* well stricken in Years. The Father for distrusting the Message was struck with Dumbness, partly as a Sign to assure him of the Truth of what was told him, and partly as a Punishment to chastise his Incredulity. When *Elizabeth* was six months gone with child, the *Virgin Mary*, then big with our Saviour, came and saluted her; upon which Salutation, she felt the Babe leaping in her Womb, and said to the Blessed Virgin, *Whence is it that the Mother of our Lord should come unto me? For lo! as soon as the Voice of thy Salutation sounded in my ears, the Babe leaped in my Womb for joy*; ver. 41, 42, 43. Whereby (as one hath observ'd) he seem'd to have some natural sense of his Duty to his Saviour, as soon as he was conceiv'd, and to do part of his Errand before he was born; for his leaping in his Mother's Womb, at the Salutation of *Mary* then newly conceiv'd of our Saviour, seem'd to give very early Tokens of his Joy, and to do homage to the Son of God, when they were yet both unborn. These were some of the Prefages and Wonders of his Conception and Birth, which fore signify'd some great and uncommon things to follow after.

When his Infancy was over, and he arriv'd to some measure of Understanding, he left his Father's House, and retir'd into the Solitude of a Wilderness; where he spent his Time in the greatest Abstinence and Devotion, and enjoy'd, as we may imagine, a most free and undisturb'd Intercourse with Heaven: for by thus sequestering himself, he escap'd the Pollutions of the World, being neither corrupted with the Manners, nor distracted with the Cares of human Life; taking his Garments from the Backs of Beasts,
and

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and his Food from the natural Care and Labour of the Bees.

Being thus consecrated from the Womb, and prepar'd by so great and almost angelical Sanctity, he was honour'd with more clear and signal Revelations than any of the Prophets that went before him; and for that reason said to be *more than a Prophet*: the other Prophets spake of his coming, and were the Messengers and Foretellers of him, as he was of Christ. *Elias*, who was one of the chiefest of the Prophets, was a Type of *St. John*, who was the immediate Precursor and Proclaimer of our Saviour: And whereas the Prophets before him deliver'd only some dark and obscure Predictions of the Messiah, he had the honour to usher him into the World, and with his Finger to point at him, with an *Ecce Agnus Dei! Behold the Lamb of God!*

And what greater Honour could be confer'd on any of the Sons of Men, than to be the Harbinger of the Son of God, and the long-expected Messiah; and to be as the Morning-Star to this Sun of Righteousness? 'Tis, we know, no small Honour to be the Harbinger of an earthly Prince, to be dispatch'd before with the joyful News of his Coming; but how much more honourable is it to be the Herald of the King of Kings, to proclaim his Coming; to introduce the Redeemer of Mankind, and to be so nearly employ'd about the Arrival of so heavenly a Person? This Honour we find confer'd here on *St. John*, who was the Voice to proclaim this heavenly Person, to prepare for his Coming, and to publish the first Glad-tidings of the Gospel. Upon which account Christ himself solemnly declar'd, *Verily, I say unto you, that among them that are born of Women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.*

But how did he prepare the Way of the Lord? that is our last Particular: Which is to shew the Manner of his making the World ready for him, and that was not with any worldly Pomp or Splendor; not by calling upon the Inhabitants of the Earth, to meet their Lord in State and Magnificence, for he purposely declin'd all this: and tho he were the great Light of the World, yet he chose to enter into it as it were in a Cloud of Obscurity and Darknes. But it was by preaching Repentance, and turning People from their Sins, saying, *Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, Matth. 3. 2. The whole World, at that time, lay in Wickedness; Vices had their Temples, and their

Votaries

Votaries too; some serv'd their Gods with all manner of leud and obscene Rites, others worship'd their drunken Deities with all kinds of Excess and Riot; others again, serv'd the Devil with barbarous and bloody Sacrifices; and generally, a great Corruption of Life and Manners had over-spread the Face of the Earth. Now *John's* Business was to alarm the World with the near Approach of the Holy Jesus, willing them to prepare to entertain him with holy Hearts and Lives, to break off their Sins by Repentance, and by a serious Amendment and Reformation of their Ways, to dispose themselves for the Glad-tidings of the Gospel; for *the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*: the long-expected Messiah was then coming, and his Kingdom ready to appear, and therefore would have them make ready for him, by abandoning of all Sin, and turning to the Ways of Righteousness, that they might be welcomed and receiv'd by him. He told the *Jews* that the Son of God was come down from Heaven, a Person far beyond him in all respects, and to whom he was not worthy to minister in the meanest Offices; that he would bring in a new and better state of Things, and enlighten the World with clearer Revelations. And then they should see the fulfilling of all the Prophecies in the Person of Christ, and behold the Substance and Reality of all those Types and Shadows that were appointed to fore signify and represent him. He sharply rebuk'd the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces* for their Hypocrisy and Malice; calling them a *Generation of Vipers*, the Spawn or Brood of the old Serpent, and warning them to *flee from the Wrath to come*; and to that end, to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; and not to boast or rely upon their being the Seed of *Abraham*, to whom they were so unlike: for God was able, of the *Gentiles*, to raise up Children to *Abraham*, who should better imitate his Faith, and walk in the Steps of his Obedience. And if they would not take this Warning to repent and amend, *the Ax would be laid to the Root of the Tree*, and utterly root out both them and their Church; for *his Fan was in his Hand*, ready to *purge his Floor*, to *gather the Wheat*, that is, good Men, *into his Garner*; and to *burn up the Chaff*, that is, obstinate Sinners, *with unquenchable Fire*. This was *St. John's* Sermon which he preach'd in the Wilderness of Judea, where great Multitudes resorted to see and hear him: which Sermon had that good Success, that *there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the Region round*

about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their Sins; Matth. 3. 5, 6. But as John was the Forerunner of Christ, so his Baptism was but a Prelude or Fore-runner of a much higher Baptism to be administer'd by him; so he himself declares, Ver. 11. *I indeed baptize you with Water unto Repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose Shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire.* While John was thus preaching and baptizing in Jordan, Jesus himself came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized of him; which he did partly to honour his Harbinger, and shew his Approbation of him in the Discharge of his Office, and partly to adorn and recommend his Baptism; but chiefly, because it behov'd him (as himself declares) *to fulfil all Righteousness.* And therefore tho St. John modestly declin'd it, saying, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* yet Jesus put this high and holy Office upon him, and was baptized of him; which gave him that honourable Title of *John the Baptist.* And when Jesus was baptiz'd, the Heavens immediately open'd, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon him; and lo! a Voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleas'd.* Where what was before proclaim'd by St. John, is attested and confirm'd by a Voice from Heaven, that he is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World.

Thus I have briefly explain'd the Gospel for this Day, in all the remarkable Parts and Passages of it. All that remains, is to make some brief Application of the whole.

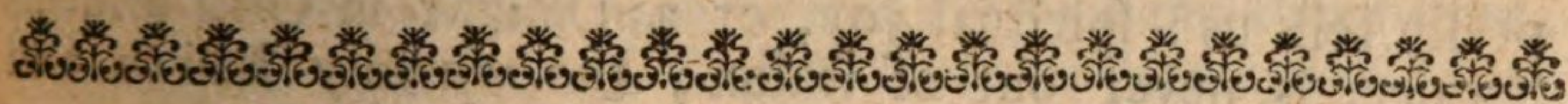
And, 1st, from St. John's sending his Disciples to our Saviour to know the Truth of his Messiahship, we may learn and labour to get the best satisfaction we can, both to our selves and others in that important Point; for that being the main Foundation of the Christian Religion, and of all the Hopes that are built upon it, we ought to be well assur'd and establish'd in the Belief of it.

2^{dly}, From Christ's appealing to his Miracles for their satisfaction, we may learn, that his Miracles are the best Argument and Demonstration of his Messiahship, and may abundantly convince us of the Truth of all his Doctrine. *His giving Sight to the Blind*, may help to cure our spiritual Blindness, and to give us a better Insight into the Truths of the Gospel. *His giving Feet to the Lame*, may

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may serve to make us walk the more readily in the Paths of his Precepts. *His cleansing the Lepers*, may help to heal the Leprosy of Sin in our Souls. *His making the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak*, may teach us to attend the more diligently to his Word, and to speak of his Praise. *His raising the Dead to Life again*, may raise our Hopes, and quicken our Faith in him. And generally all his Miracles may strengthen our Belief, and make us more firmly adhere to him.

Lastly, From St. John's preparing the Way of the Lord by the Doctrine of Repentance, we may learn to prepare for the approaching Festival the same way; that is, to remember and celebrate his coming in the Flesh, by a hearty Repentance and turning from all our Sins. *This Lamb of God came to take away the Sins of the World*; and therefore we must cast them off, when we remember his Coming. He regards not fine Clothes, but the Garments of Praise and the Clothing of Humility; nor are we so much to pamper our Bodies with good Chear, as to refresh our Souls with the heavenly Food of his Body and Blood: And by thus remembering and preparing for his first Coming, we shall be remember'd and receiv'd by him at his second.



DISCOURSE VII.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday in *Advent*.

Philip. iv. 4—8.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your Moderation be known unto all Men; the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God, &c.

THIS Day being the Sunday immediately preceding the Nativity of our Lord, calls upon us to expect him with Joy, and to meet him with Exultation. The Collect for the Day prays for the hastening of his Coming, and teaches us, as Men impatient of Delay, to
E 2 say,

I say, Raise up thy Power, and come among us, and with great Might succour us; that whereas thro our Sins and Wickedness we are sore lett and hinder'd in running the Race that is set before us, thy bountiful Grace may speedily help and deliver us.

The Epistle for the Day recommends to us four or five Christian Graces or Vertues, very suitable to the near Approach of so great a Solemnity: and they are, Joy, Moderation, Trust, Thanksgiving, and Prayer; to all which is added a gracious Promise of a Blessing to all that observe and practise them. Of these in their order.

And, *First*, I begin, as the Epistle doth, with an Exhortation to Joy; *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice.* To rejoice in general, is to raise the Spirits to a pitch of Mirth and Chearfulness, express'd by the lively Air and Freedom of the Tongue and Countenance. To *rejoice in the Lord*, is to do this in his Cause, at his Call, and for his Sake. To *rejoice in the Lord alway*, is to keep up our Spirits to this pitch, and to be ever in tune and readiness to sound forth his Praise. And lest we should let them fall and sink into Sorrow and Sadness, the Exhortation is doubled and repeated; *And again I say, Rejoice.* But is this to be done always? Yes, for so the Text expressly tells us: spiritual Joy, or a Delight in God and his Service, is never out of season; tho worldly Mirth and sensual Joy may be and often is unseasonable. A merry Heart and a chearful Countenance recommend Religion, whose Ways thereby appear to be *Ways of Pleasantness, and all its Paths Peace.* Whereas heavy Hearts, sour Faces, and dejected Countenances, bring a scandal upon the Ways of God, as if they were Enemies to all Mirth, and doom'd Men to an absurd and perpetual Melancholy. And therefore the Apostle here presses the *Philippians* to *rejoice in the Lord alway*: and lest they should forget it at any time, and give way to Sadness, he renews and redoubles it upon them, *And again I say, Rejoice.* The same Advice he gives to the *Thessalonians*, in the first Epistle, Chap. 5. 16. *Rejoice evermore*; that is, not only in times of signal Mercies and Deliverances, when Men are free and forward enough to rejoice, but likewise in times of Affliction and Adversity, when the Spirits are apt to fail and sink; then it is that we should endeavour to bear up, and to preserve a chearful Heart and Mind. And to this the Words of our Text seem to refer, where the Apostle wills us to rejoice in the Lord always,

always, whatever may befall us; for Afflictions and Persecutions, which are the worst that can happen to us in the Service of God, are rather matter of Joy than Grief to us; for they are the Discipline of a loving Father, the Marks of his Favour, that tend to the promoting of our present Good, and the increase of our future Glory. And therefore St. James bids us to *count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations, and rather to rejoice than to faint under Tribulation.*

But we have now a Season approaching, that calls for our greatest Joy and Rejoicing, *viz.* The Coming of the Son of God from Heaven, to rescue us from all the Miseries and Troubles of this present Life, and that which is to come. And what Joy can be great enough to solemnize his Appearance? Abraham *rejoic'd at this Day, for he saw it and was glad*; John 8.56. The Word in the Original signifies his leaping and dancing for joy: and if Abraham, at such a remote and imperfect prospect of him, was so transported with Joy; what Extasies of Joy ought we to express at his near and actual Appearance? If a promis'd Messiah at distance was such glad Tidings, how much greater must a God manifest in the Flesh be? Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets saw this Saviour only thro a Glass darkly, they beheld him veil'd under obscure Types and Prophecies; whereas he hath shew'd himself in these latter days with open face, we have liv'd to see the fulfilling of all those dark Prophecies, and our Eyes have seen that Salvation, which was prepar'd before the face of all People. And if they were so affected with Joy at their dark Discoveries of him under the Law, how much more transported ought we to be, at the brighter Revelations of him under the Gospel? Zachary and Elizabeth fell a praising of God for blessing them with a Son, who was the Forerunner of our Saviour; and after rejoic'd greatly in the Salvation that follow'd in it, saying in his *Benedictus*, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his People, and raised up a mighty Salvation for them out of the House of his Servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets, which have been since the World began.* Luke 1. 68, 69. And the Blessed Virgin in her *Magnificat* declares, that *her Soul did magnify the Lord, and her Spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour*, ver. 46. Which great and early Examples have ed us the way, and taught us to follow them, in rejoicing

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in the Lord alway: And therefore again I say, Rejoice; the first Vertue here recommended to us.

The *Second* is *Moderation*, in the following words; *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men, the Lord is at hand.* And here because this Vertue hath been grossly misunderstood and perverted, 'twill be requisite to shew what this *Moderation* is, and how it is to be made *known unto Men*; together with the Reason annex'd, because *the Lord is at hand.* For the

1st, *Moderation* in general is a Vertue that consists in the well-governing of the Desires, Passions, and Affections of the Soul, by confining them to their proper Objects, and keeping them within their due bounds and measures. But before I explain this Definition to you, I must observe a new and wrong Notion of Moderation, that hath been lately started, and too greedily embrac'd in our days. And that is,

Some have taken Moderation for a Lukewarmness and Neutrality in Religion. Hence a Want of Zeal for the Church, a Coldness and Indifferency about the Orders and Constitutions of it, a halting between two Opinions, and trimming between the Church and the Conventicle, being sometimes of the one and sometimes of the other, without being constant or true to either, frequently pass under the sacred Name of Moderation: And they that abate of their Conformity to the Establish'd Church, and do their Duty by halves; they that countenance Sects and Divisions, to disturb and bring Disorder and Confusion in it, too often pass under the Stile of moderate Men. But this Notion of Moderation and moderate Men is no where mention'd or countenanc'd in Holy Scripture, but is directly contrary to the Rules and Precepts given in it. This sort of Moderation was sharply rebuk'd in the Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 15, 16. *I know thy Works* (saith God) *and wish thou wert either hot or cold; but since thou art neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* And indeed, this lukewarm and indifferent Temper is so nauseous to God and Man, that it were not amiss if such Persons were spu'd out of the Church.

But to pass from this false to the true Notion of Moderation; I stile it a Vertue, that consists in the well-governing the Desires, Passions, and Affections of the Soul; and that hath two Branches: The one consists in regulating our
bodily

bodily Appetites and Desires after the good things of this Life: The other consists in the well-governing our Passions and Affections, as to the Evils, Afflictions, and Troubles of this World.

The first part of Moderation consists in regulating our Appetites and Desires as to the good things of this Life. Thus to moderate our Appetites in the Use of God's Creatures, by keeping the Mean in eating and drinking, without running into Inordinacy or Excess, is a good piece of Moderation, and is the same with Temperance and Sobriety. Again, the moderating our Desires after the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this Life, so as to take no ill methods in getting, nor to exceed the due Bounds and Measures in using them; is another excellent piece of Moderation, and is the same with Contentment and Chastity.

The second part of Moderation consists in the well-governing our Passions and Affections, as to the Evils, Afflictions, and Troubles of this Life. Thus to moderate our Grief, so as not to faint or sink under them, nor murmur against God for sending them, nor yet to use any sinister or indirect Means to help our selves out of them, but to bear up with Courage under them, and to wait God's time and way to be deliver'd from them; is a good part of Christian Moderation, and is the same with Meekness and Patience, and so 'tis frequently understood here in the words of the Text.

But there is yet another Notion of Moderation; and that is, to signify a Mitigation of the Rigor of strict and exact Justice; so the word *μετριοτης* in the Text often signifies: thus mildly to interpret and execute Laws, not dealing with Rigor, but acting by the Rules of Reason and Charity; this is often stil'd Moderation, and is the same with Equity and Gentleness, which is made a Property of Divine and Heavenly Wisdom, *James 3. 17.*

These are the principal Parts or Acts of that *Moderation* which the Apostle, in the next place, would have to be known unto all Men; that is, not by a vain Affectation of being call'd or thought moderate Men, much less by an obstinate Opposition and Disobedience to Laws and good Orders, the Guise and Practice of such as would be thought so: for these are no signs of Modesty or Moderation, but Marks of an ignorant and intemperate Zeal; and instead of making known any Moderation or Meekness of Mind,

discover only a Peevishness and Perverseness of Spirit. To make our Moderation known unto all Men, it must be by Meekness and Patience, by a quiet Submission to the Will of God, and the lawful Commands of our Superiors. This, Christian Modesty it self requires from us; for that teaches us to *esteem others better than our selves*, especially our Superiours in Authority and Wisdom, and to *know them that are over us in the Lord, and to submit to them, for they watch for our Souls*. The doing hereof will best discover our Moderation, and *shew out of a good Conversation our Works with Meekness of Wisdom*; and that will preserve the Peace and Order of the World, adorn our Profession, and save our own Souls. And this we should the rather do,

3dly, Because *the Lord is at hand*. With this Argument the Apostle here urges his Exhortation, *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men*. Why? for the Lord is at hand. His coming as a Saviour is near, to reward the meek, the patient, and the sincere Christians; and his coming as a Judge is not far off, to punish the lukewarm, the false, and the double-minded Hypocrites. The Consideration whereof should make us temperate in all things, and to moderate our Desires, Passions, and Affections, as to the matters of this World; which is the second Vertue here recommended to us.

The Third is, Trust and Affiance in God, express'd here by *being careful for nothing*, ver. 6. which cannot signify the casting off all due and prudent Care about the Good or Evils of this Life, and to have no thoughts for obtaining the one, or avoiding the other; for the Holy Scriptures often excite us to a regular Care and Concern for these things: but the Apostle here wills to cast off all doubting and distrustful Cares about these matters, to commit our selves unto God in well-doing, and to leave the Issue and Success of them intirely to him. In our pursuit of any Good, we are not to leave the Paths of Honesty and Vertue, or to betake our selves to any indirect Arts to compass it. In our flight from any Evil, we are not to leave God's way, or fall into any sinful Course to escape it: but in both to cast our selves upon God's Providence in the use of all good Means, and to rely upon his Promises, who *will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to escape*; 1 Cor. 10. 13. If we do on our part what belongs to us, we may rest assur'd, that

that God will not fail of his ; and therefore we may safely place our Trust and Confidence in him.

The next Duty here recommended to us, is *Prayer and Supplication*, and in every thing to make our *Requests known unto God* ; ver. 6. This he expects from us, Prayer for the obtaining of Good, and Supplication for the averting of Evil ; and hath made these the Conditions of his bestowing of them : *I will be sought to* (saith God) *for these things.* We must ask before we shall receive, seek before we shall find, and knock before it will be open'd unto us ; *Mat. 7. 7.* And sure they come easy enough, if we may have for asking. *In every thing* (saith the Apostle) *let your Requests be made known unto God.* Every thing relating either to Body or Soul, to this Life or the next, all the Blessings appertaining to each, are in his disposal, and will be handed to us, upon addressing for them : And his Promise of Success is sufficient Encouragement to put up our Petitions for them. To all which is added, in the

Last place, the great Duty of Thanksgiving : *Let Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving,* be made unto God. One great Office of this Season, is to render thanks unto God for his inestimable Blessings ; and especially for sending his Son, with all the Benefits we receive thereby. Hence our Church declares it meet, right, and our bounden Duty, at all times and in all places, to give thanks to the Lord our God. And indeed 'tis but just to give unto the Lord the Honour due unto him : for the Blessings he bestows, are not due to us, nor deserv'd by us, they are the sole Effects of his Bounty and Goodness ; and therefore all the Thanks and all the Praise is intirely his. Neither is this any difficult or laborious Task, but an easy thing to be thankful : it requires not now any chargeable Oblations or Sacrifices, nor any long Journeys or Pilgrimages ; but all Times and Places are ready for the Duty of Thanksgiving. None are so busy or so mean, but may with the primitive Christians say, *The Lord be praised !* which if it come from a thankful Heart, will be better accepted than the most costly Hecatombs.

Nor is this Duty less pleasant than easy ; for *it is good to sing Praises to our God, yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful* ; *Psal. 147. 1.* Yea, the Psalmist, who was much exercis'd in this Duty, tells us, that his Soul was satisfi'd

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tisfy'd as with Marrow and Fatness, when his Mouth praised God with thankful Lips ; Psal. 63. 6.

Moreover, this Duty is highly profitable as well as pleasant ; for as Ingratitude stops the Current of Divine Favours, so the Vertue of Gratitude opens the Course of his Blessings, and makes them flow in larger Streams. And we cannot better engage the Divine Bounty to bestow more, than to be truly sensible and thankful for what we have receiv'd already.

These are the great Vertues or Duties here recommended, as proper for the Season, and preparatory to the approaching Solemnity ; to the performance whereof, the Apostle annexes a Blessing in the Close, in these words, *And the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds through Christ Jesus* : meaning, that the Practice of these Vertues will be an excellent means to preserve the Peace of their Minds here, and to bring them to everlasting Peace and Tranquillity hereafter.

To draw then to a conclusion, let us learn hence, *1st, To rejoice in the Lord alway ;* and from the doubling the Exhortation, *And again I say, Rejoice,* let us learn to double our Joy and Rejoicing in him at this joyful Season. The Psalmist, that great Master of this holy Exercise, upon a remote View of Christ's Coming, invites all People hereunto, saying, *O be joyful in the Lord, all ye Lands ; serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with a Song : O go your way into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise ; be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.* Psal. 100. The Apostles, upon the nearer View and Approach of these glad Tidings, call upon us to rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

2dly, Let our Moderation be known unto all Men, because *the Lord is at hand* to observe and reward it : Let our Moderation appear in the chearful and yet temperate Use of God's Creatures, not running into any Excess of Riot, nor worshipping our Saviour, as the *Israelites* did their molten Calf, by sitting down to eat and drink, and rising up to play ; but preparing our selves for the richer and better Provisions of Christ's Table. 'Twas not (as one hath well observ'd) the curious and busy Housewifery of *Martha*, but the serious and abstracted Faith of *Mary*, that made the Entertainment at *Bethany*. If we will treat our Lord acceptably, it must not be from the Shambles or the

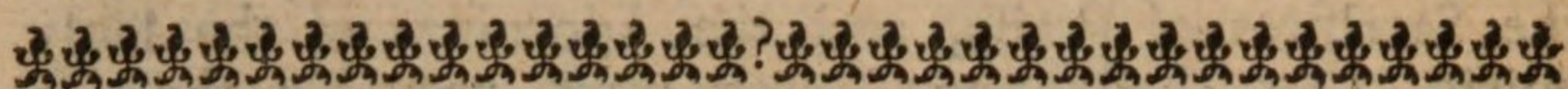
the Mercers, with costly Dishes and fine Clothes; but with the Sacrifices of Praise, and the Adornings of the Holy Spirit. Our Feasts upon Earth must resemble those in Heaven, where Righteousness is the best Robe, and Delight in God the Cheer and the Rejoicing. But our truest Moderation must be seen in the well-governing of our Passions, that our Anger run not into Extravagance and Fury; that our Love degenerate not into Lust and Lasciviousness; that our Grief lead not to Despondency, or make us sink under the Crosses and Troubles of this World: but looking to the Cross of Christ, let us learn to despise all earthly Crosses, and to rejoice even in Tribulation.

To which end, *3dly*, Let us learn hence to put our whole Trust and Affiance in God, without any carking or distrustful Cares, either about the Necessaries or the Afflictions of this Life. For the Necessaries of Life, the Apostle bids us to be careful for nothing; that is, in a too anxious, thoughtful, and perplexing manner: and our Saviour sends us to the Birds of the Air, the Beasts and Herbs of the Field, who are all provided for by the Care and Kindness of Heaven, without any Care and Trouble of their own; *Mat. 6.* For the Troubles and Tribulations of this Life, he wills us not to be too fearful or solicitous to be kept or deliver'd from them; but to commit our way unto the Lord, and he will bring it to pass.

Only, in the next place, let us by Prayer and Supplication make our Requests known unto God, who is both able and willing to help us, and hath promis'd either to preserve us from, or to deliver us out of all our distress, upon our Dependence upon him.

To all which, let us add our Thanksgivings unto God for his past and present Mercies, and rely upon him for future Favours, by daily Prayers to and Praises of him. And then the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, will keep our Hearts and Minds in the Knowledg and Love of him: which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.





DISCOURSE VIII.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday in *Advent*.

St. John i. 19—28.

This is the Record of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who art thou? And he confess'd and deny'd not, but confess'd, I am not the Christ, &c.

THE Gospel for this Day gives us a farther Account of St. John, in the discharge of his Office, as Christ's Harbinger, and the Witness he bare of him: for the Jews hearing the great Fame that John had gain'd in the World, and the great Concourse of People that flock'd to him, to hear his Doctrine and to be baptiz'd of him, began to consider and inquire farther into him, fearing that there might be something more than ordinary in this matter. And therefore the Beginning of the Gospel tells us, that *the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to him*, to know more of it from his own mouth, and likewise *the Record or Testimony* he gave concerning Christ.

The first Question they ask'd of him, was, *Who art thou?* being in great suspence about him, and supposing he might take upon him to be the Messias. But his Answer was flatly opposite to their Expectation, for *he confess'd and deny'd not, but confess'd that he was not the Christ*. The manner of expressing it was usual among the *Hebrews*, in a matter which they detested or deny'd with strong Asseveration, doubling and repeating it, to put it out of all doubt or fear. Accordingly they saying here of St. John, that *he confess'd and deny'd not, but confess'd that he was not the Christ*; signifies his free and full Acknowledgment, without any Reserve or Equivocation, that he was not the Messias prophesied of, and so long expected by them.

Whereupon they put a second Question to him, and asked, *What then, art thou Elias?* The reason of putting this Question to him, was from an Imagination that the

Jews

Jews had of *Elias's* coming in Person before the *Messias*. This they gather'd from that Prophecy of *Malachi*, Chap. 4. 5. *Behold! I will send you Elijah the Prophet before that great and dreadful Day, and he shall turn the Hearts of the Fathers to their Children, and the Hearts of the Children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the Earth with a Curse.* Which Prophecy they wretchedly misunderstood, by applying that to the first Coming of the *Messias*, a Day of Joy and Rejoicing, which was spoken of his second Coming; stil'd here and elsewhere, *the great and terrible Day of the Lord*. Hence we find some of the Disciples, who likewise mistook this Prophecy, asking our Saviour, that since he was already come, and reveal'd in Glory, without any appearance of *Elias*, *Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come?* Mat. 17. 10. To which our Saviour answer'd, *Elias truly shall first come and restore all things*, at the last and great Day; but he who was prefigur'd by *Elias* for the first Coming, is already come: so he tells them in the 12th Verse, *But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.* By which they understood, that he spake unto them of *John the Baptist*.

And indeed, *Elias* was the Type of this *John*, for he resembled and prefigur'd him in many things; for he liv'd for the most part in the Forest of Mount-Carmel, as *John* did in the Wilderness of Judea, 2 Kings 4. 25. both leading a solitary and retir'd Life, in the like rough Apparel, and the same coarse and sylvestrian Fare. He was fed by Ravens in his Solitude, as St. *John* was by Bees. He fasted beyond all the other Prophets, and so did *John* beyond all but Christ himself. He was bold in rebuking Vice in *Ahab*, as *John* was in *Herod*; and as the one was persecuted by *Jezebel*, so was the other by *Herodias*. *Elias's* passing thro the divided Waters of *Jordan*, typify'd St. *John's* baptizing in the same River: and in many other things he was a Type and Forerunner of *John*, as *John* was of Christ. For these Reasons it was that they put this Question to him, *Art thou Elias?* To which he answer'd, *I am not*: meaning, that he was not *Elias* in Person, tho he was in Figure; for 'tis said he came in the Power and Spirit, but not in the Presence of *Elias*. But this gave them no satisfaction, and therefore they put a third Question to him, *Art thou that Prophet?* meaning, that Prophet mention'd and foretold by *Moses*, that should rise up in the latter Days, Deut. 18.

15, 18. or else some special Prophet, (as others would have it) perhaps *Jeremy*, or some other that had been among them, whose Return they expected before *Elias*, as they did him before Christ : for which see Dr. *Hammond*.

But what Answer did *John* give them concerning his being that Prophet ? Why *he answer'd, no ; he was not : but finding they could not get within him, nor any thing out of him ; they ask'd again a fourth time, and said unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us : What sayest thou of thy self ?*

But why did these Priests and *Levites* use so much Importunity, and shew so great Inquisitiveness into this Matter ? Why this proceeded partly from a Jealousy of what Influence *John's* preaching and baptizing might have upon their Church ; for finding the People in such great numbers flocking to him, to hear, and to be baptiz'd of him, they fear'd the Subversion or at least an Alteration of their Polity, and that he was about to bring in a new way of Worship among them ; which made them so solicitous to know who and what he was. And partly likewise, to find some occasion to bring him before the great Court of the *Sanhedrim* at *Jerusalem*, who were appointed to try the Prophets, and to judg of all Pretenders to Revelation : which made *St. John* not very forward to give them any direct Answer concerning himself.

However, at last to shew them that he was neither afraid or asham'd of his Office, he boldly told them who and what he was ; saying, *I am the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, make strait the Way of the Lord, as saith the Prophet Isaias.* This Prophecy is found in that forecited Place of *Isaiab*, chap. 40. 3, 4, 5. where the Prophet speaks of a *Voice of one crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make strait in the Desert a Highway for our God.* Adding, that *every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low, and the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough Places plain, and the Glory of the Lord shall be reveal'd, and all Flesh shall see it together ; for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Now *St. John* tells them, that he was the Person here spoken of, and of whom these things were foretold ; for he was sent before the *Messias*, to prepare the Way for him, by levelling and making strait and plain all Places before him : which was not meant literally of material Hills and Highways, as is usually done before great Princes ; but spiritually,

ritually, of what was high and ambitious, low and base, perverse and crooked in Men's Lives and Ways, before such a Lord, as was to be entertain'd not in Palaces, but in Men's Hearts. Pride and Vain-glory are the Mountains that must be brought low, the humble and lowly Minds are the Valleys that shall be exalted, Hypocrisy and Fraud are the crooked Ways that must be made strait, Oppression and Injustice the rough Ways that must be made plain. In a word, every exorbitant Lust and Affection must be regulated and brought into subjection to the Faith and Obedience of Christ. This rectifying, smoothing and levelling our Thoughts and Desires, is *the preparing the Way of the Lord, and making his Path strait*; into which we must all enter and persevere, if we mean to arrive at last to eternal Life.

This was the Account, that St. John gave of himself, to them who came to make this enquiry of him.

But who were the Persons that were sent upon this Errand? why, that the next Words tell us; *And they that were sent were of the Pharisees*. This is noted to shew the Subtlety and Malice of that Sect, and likewise the Prudence and Courage of St. John, in withstanding and frustrating all their Designs; for the *Pharisees* were Persons in greatest vogue among the *Jews* for Learning and Piety. St. Luke joins the *Scribes* with them, who commonly went together, and these were the great Doctors and Expounders of the Law, and both were the prime Masters and Rulers in *Israel*: And yet St. John, who was train'd up in a Wilderness, and sequestred from all other Conversation but that of Heaven, having never learnt the Arts of Reasoning, nor been bred to any elaborate Schemes of Speech, did yet, by his plain Simplicity, confound the Wisdom of the Wise; nor could those great Masters of Learning and Eloquence get any ground upon him, either by the Questions they propos'd to him, or the Answers they receiv'd from him; he being assisted from above with a Mouth and Wisdom, which they were not able to gainsay or resist.

But yet they were not willing to leave him so; but finding that he deny'd himself to be the Messiah, or that great Prophet, they propounded to him another Question, and said unto him, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet?* that is, why then dost thou receive Disciples and Followers by the way of Baptism or Washing, which was the solemn manner of making or receiving Profelytes? or else, by what Authority

thority dost thou bring in this new Sacrament, in opposition to, and contempt of those religious Washings, that were appointed and observ'd before? By this Question they hop'd to intangle and intrap him; but St. *John* wisely defeated them, by an humble and close Answer in the following words; saying, *I baptize with Water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is who, coming after me, is prefer'd before me, whose Shoes-Latchet I am not worthy to unloose.* In which words he declar'd, that he baptiz'd not by any Power or Authority of his own, but only as Christ's Minister and Messenger, who, says he, sent me a little before him, and authoris'd me so to do: which Christ is now already come, yea standeth among you, tho ye know him not, having not yet manifested himself. 'Tis by his Order and Authority (saith he) that I do what I do, and upon him depends all the spiritual Virtue of Baptism, of which I dispense only the outward Sign. He it is before whom I am sent to prepare the way, and tho he cometh after me, yet is infinitely before me in Power and Dignity, for I am not worthy either to bear or unloose the Latchet of his Shoe, and much less to be one of his Disciples. Thus he lessen'd himself the more, because they seem'd to magnify him: And Christ beginning then to appear, and make himself known, he left *Jordan* for his Disciples to baptize in, and retir'd to *Enon* near *Salem* in *Galilee*, where being much Waters, he baptiz'd many; and hearing there that Christ had manifested himself both by his Doctrine and Miracles, and that all People flock'd to him to hear and see him, St. *John* went and resign'd his Disciples and all his Auditors to him; rejoicing greatly that now his Message and Joy were fulfil'd, in great Humility saying, *He must increase, but I must decrease.* And when some of his Disciples seem'd a little uneasy at this Change of Affairs, he told them, that he was only a Waiter on this Bridegroom of the Church, and that 'twas enough for him to stand by and hear his sweet Colloquies with his Bride; as we read, *John* 3. 26——31.

Now because these memorable Passages of St. *John* ought not to be forgotten, the Place is recorded where these things were acted; the Gospel concluding with these words, saying, *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

Thus I have consider'd the several Parts and Passages of this Day's Gospel; to which I shall only add one thing more,

more observ'd of St. *John*, and that is, that in all this great Transaction, *he wrought no Miracle*; John 10. 41. the reason whereof was, that the Power of working Miracles being the best Proof and Evidence of the *Messias*, it was not permitted to *John*, lest he should thereby draw the People too much to him as the *Messias*; and so their Minds should be distracted about Christ and him in that point: and therefore that Power was reserv'd for Christ only, and those to whom he would give it, as the highest Proof and Demonstration of his *Messiahship*.

For the Application of the whole, I shall consider some of the principal Vertues of St. *John the Baptist*, and recommend them as far as we are capable to our Imitation. And indeed, next to our Blessed Saviour, whose Forerunner he was, we cannot find a better Pattern to follow, than *John the Baptist*, whose whole Life was a continual Lecture of the strictest and severest Vertue: our Lord himself stil'd him, *A burning and a shining Light*, John 5. 35. *he was a burning Light*, by the Zeal and Warmth of his Doctrine; *and a shining Light*, by the bright and glorious Lustre of his Example. As for his Doctrine, the

1st, And great Lesson he taught, was that of Repentance, which he loudly preach'd and proclaim'd to the World, as the best and solemnest Preparation for a Saviour, and that which can alone entitle us to the Benefits and Blessings of his Coming. St. *John* was the first Preacher of the Gospel, and the first open Promulgator of Christ's Kingdom; and the first Doctrine he preach'd was Repentance, the best Means of receiving and propagating both; saying, *Mat. 3. 5. Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; that is, reform and amend your Lives, preparing your selves by hearty Sorrow for your Sins to receive Mercy and Pardon from God by the true *Messias*, who is just at hand to settle and establish his Kingdom in Righteousness, to give Salvation to such as repent, and final Ruin to impenitent Sinners. And Christ himself at his Coming began his Preaching with the same Doctrine of Repentance, *Mat. 4. 17.* so did his Apostles after him; for we find St. *Peter* preaching to his new Converts, *Repentance for the Remission of Sins*, Acts 2. 38. So that Repentance and Reformation of Life is the prime Duty of the Gospel, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and the End of it. Christ's Kingdom is not so much without as within us, to rule in our Hearts, to subdue the Power of Sin and Satan there: and if we hope for any Benefit by his Coming, we

must turn both out of our Hearts, and not suffer any kind of Wickedness to reign or abide within us.

2dly, In *St. John's* Doctrine we may observe his great Boldness and Courage in the Delivery of it; for he was neither daunted with Fear, or dismay'd with Difficulties in publishing his Message. When he first proclaim'd our Saviour, a great part of the World were divided in their Opinions about him. The *Pharisees* finding that his Preaching tended to bring in another and more spiritual way of Worship, and to destroy the Ceremonial part of *Moses's* Law, which they fondly doted on, began to be mov'd with great Indignation against him; whom he therefore treated with a Roughness and Severity suited to their Malice and Hypocrisy.

The *Gentiles* likewise look'd upon this Holy Man as an Enemy to their Idol Gods; and fearing the Downfal of their Idolatries, conceiv'd no small Displeasure against him, which made him set himself against them, with a Courage suitable to his Cause, willing them to turn from these Vanities to the Living God, or else threatening them with everlasting Destruction. He spar'd not the Vices of *Herod*, whom he sharply reprov'd for his Incest with his Brother *Philip's* Wife; which Boldness and Freedom is recorded with Honour in Holy Scripture. And 'twere well if *St. John* had herein more Followers; for tho this Freedom cost him his Life, yet was it far more honourable by Courage and Magnanimity thus to lose it, than to seek by Cowardice and Pusillanimity to save it: which may teach us rather boldly to rebuke, than basely to fear or flatter the greatest Offenders.

3dly, *St. John* was remarkable for his singular Piety, Self-denial, and Contempt of this World; for he abandon'd the World almost as soon as he knew it, and withdrew into the Privacies of a Desert to avoid the many Evils and Temptations of it. He affected nothing of that empty Glory which so often dazzles the Eyes, and inveigles the Minds of vain Men, but retir'd from it betimes to more sublime and heavenly Contemplations.

Now this great Example should serve at least to lessen our Esteem of this World, and to wean us in some measure from the admir'd Vanities and Pleasures of it. Tho we are not hereby requir'd to retire into Desarts and Solitudes to avoid the Snares and Allurements of the World, which in some cases is to run away from the Enemy, that we are to withstand and conquer; yet we are all taught from hence to take off our Hearts from an inordinate Love and Pursuit of the things
here

here below, and to raise them to more celestial and durable Felicities; we are to look upon our selves rather as Pilgrims and Strangers, than Citizens and Inhabitants here on Earth: and like the *Israelites*, travelling thro a Wilderness to the heavenly *Canaan*, counting our Home and Happiness to be there; and then where our Rest and our Treasure is, there will our Hearts be also.

4thly, Another memorable Vertue of *John the Baptist*, was his Mildness and Clemency. As he preceded our Saviour in his new and spiritual Doctrine, so did he resemble him too in his Mansuetude and Meekness; for tho he handled the *Scribes*, *Pharisees* and *Sadduces* roughly, as proud incorrigible Sinners, yet towards the Soldiers, Publicans, and other great, but relenting Sinners, he us'd the same Meekness as Christ did, teaching them their Duty for the future, without upbraiding their former Faults: from whence we learn to restore erring and offending Brethren with the Spirit of Meekness.

Lastly, Let us imitate St. *John* in his Constancy to the Faith, and his patient Suffering for the Truth: He was sent by God upon the noblest Errand and Embassy that was ever committed to any Creature; and he discharg'd it with the greatest Fortitude and Fidelity: He was above the Fears and Frowns of Men, and shrink'd not from his Duty for any Difficulties or Opposition. When he was imprison'd by *Herod*, he ceas'd not to declare and magnify his Message; and being after call'd to bear Witness to the Truth, he most readily and cheerfully seal'd it with his Blood. Thus dy'd this great and holy Man, a glorious Example of Patience and Perseverance in the Faith. And the same Voice that once cry'd in the Wilderness, *Prepare ye the Way of the Lord*, now calls upon us to make ready for him, to welcome his first Appearance, that we may be welcom'd by him at his second; that when he shall appear again with his Holy Angels, we also may appear with him in Glory: Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE IX.

The EPISTLE for the Nativity of our Lord,
or the Birth-day of CHRIST, commonly
call'd *Christmas*.

Hebrews i. 1 — 12.

*God, who at sundry Times, and in divers Manners,
spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Pro-
phets, hath in these last Days spoken unto us by
his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things,
by whom also he made the Worlds, &c.*

WE are now arriv'd, from the four Sundays in *Advent*,
to the high Festival of Christ's Nativity; wherein
we are to remember the Incarnation of the Son of
God, that great Mystery of Godliness, the prime Pillar of
our Religion, and the firm Foundation of all our Hopes and
Expectations.

The Collect for this Day puts us in mind of the Son of
God's being born, not only of the Seed of a Woman, but of
the Womb of a pure Virgin, and thereby his taking our Na-
ture upon him; and withal teaches us to pray, that as he
was born of our Flesh, so we may be regenerate and born
again of his holy Spirit; and as he by his Incarnation par-
took of our Human Nature, so we by spiritual Regeneration
may be Partakers of his Divine Nature.

The Epistle for the Day acquaints us,

First, With one great End and Office of Christ's Incarna-
tion, or taking our Nature upon him; and that was to reveal
to us the Mind and Will of his Father, which he did more
fully and clearly than ever was done by all or any of the
Prophets before, as we read *ver. 1, 2*.

Secondly, It sets forth the high Dignity and Greatness of
his Person, being equal in Glory and Greatness to the Father,
from whom he came; *ver. 3*.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It shews us his exceeding great Preheminence above the Angels, in sundry Instances and Particulars; from the 4th to the 10th Verse.

Fourthly, It concludes with the Eternity of his Duration, shewing him to be before the Worlds, which he made by his Power; and that he will be after them when all things will be destroy'd. These things contain the Substance of the Epistle for this Day, and must be particularly handled.

I begin then, as the Epistle does, with the Manner of God's speaking to us now in these latter Days, which is much different from that in which he spake to our Fathers of old before Christ's Coming; and that chiefly in two Respects:

For, 1st, He spake to them, *at sundry times*, by Parts and Piece-meal; so the word *πολυμερῶς* in the Original signifies: whereas he speaks to us once for all, and imparts his Mind altogether. Again,

2^{dly}, He spake to the Fathers by *divers Persons*, and by *sundry Ways and Methods*; so *πολυτρόπως* signifies: whereas he speaks to us now by one only, and in one Way, and that is by his Son, whom he hath made Heir of all. I say, God spake to them of old *at sundry times*; that is, he discover'd things by degrees, not all at once, but by several Parts and Steps, something at one time, and something at another; something to one Person, and something to another: he did not in any Age or Place reveal them altogether, but proceeded gradually in making known the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and the nearer they came to the Fulness of Time, the plainer were their Discoveries of this great Mystery of the Incarnation, manifested on this Day.

To *Adam* it was reveal'd, that the Son of God should be the Seed of a Woman, and that he should bruise the Serpent's Head; Gen. 3. 15. which was all that was made known unto him.

To *Abraham* some time after it was reveal'd, that he should be of his Seed, and that in him all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed; Gen. 22. 18. and that was all he knew of it.

To *Jacob* it was after reveal'd, that he should be of the Tribe of *Judah*; Gen. 49. call'd therefore the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*.

To *David* it was discover'd, that the Messiah should descend from his Loins; *Psal.* 132. 11, 12.

To *Isaiah* it was told, that he should be born of a Virgin; *Isa.* 9.

To *Daniel* was reveal'd the time of his Coming, which was after seventy Weeks of Years; *Dan.* 9.

To *Micah* was discover'd the Place of his Nativity, which was *Bethlehem Ephrata*, one of the least among the Hundreds of *Judah*; *Mic.* 5.

These were things that related to his Person, which were reveal'd by degrees to sundry Persons; as were also his Offices: for

To *Moses* it was discover'd that he should be a *Prophet*, to reveal the Mind of God to his People; *Deut.* 18. 15.

To *David* it was told, he should be a *Priest*, to intercede for them; *Psal.* 110. 4.

To *Jeremiah*, that he should be a *King* to rule over them; *Jer.* 23. 5, 6.

Then for his Names:

To *Isaiah* it was imparted, that his Name should be *Emmanuel*, that is, *God with us*, *Isa.* 7. 14. & *Mat.* 1. 23.

To *Jeremiah*, that he should be call'd, *The Lord our Righteousness*, *Jer.* 23. and to others after by other Titles and Appellations. All which Matters were imparted to them of old, at distant Times, to divers Persons, and in different Measures. But now

All these things are reveal'd to us together, and by the fulfilling of Prophecies, set in a clearer Light before us, call'd therefore *the Faith at once deliver'd to the Saints*; *Jude* ver. 1. Their Knowledg was but in part and by piece-meal; but now that which is perfect being come, all that was before imperfect is done away. We have liv'd to see all their Predictions accomplish'd in the Person of Christ, whose Birth and Incarnation we this Day commemorate; by which we are bless'd with one entire Revelation of those Divine Mysteries, which were never so fully known before. Again,

3dly, God spake to the Fathers of old not only at distant Times, and in different Measures, but also in divers Ways and Manners. As,

(1.) He spake to them sometimes in Dreams and Visions; so Holy *Job* tells us, *Chap.* 33. 14, 15, 16. *God speaketh in a Dream, in a Vision of the Night, when deep Sleep falleth upon Men, and Slumberings upon their Bed; then he openeth the Ears of Men, and sealeth their Instruction, &c.* Thus he spake to *Isaiah*, *Chap.* 6. 1. and to *Daniel*, *Chap.* 10. 9, 10, 11. and to many others. Again,

(2.) God spake sometimes by the Oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*; that is, by shining Stones, or little Images in the Breast.

Breast-Plate of the High Priest : Thus he spake to *David* and others, when consulted upon occasion.

(3.) God spake sometimes by a Voice from Heaven, call'd *Bath Coll*, as we read *1 Kings* 19. 13. which Voice sounded at our Saviour's Baptism and Transfiguration ; *Matth.* 3. & Chap. 17.

(4.) *God spake to the Fathers of old by the Prophets* : Thus he spake to the *Jews* all along under the Old Testament, *Moses* and the Prophets delivering the Mind of God to them, as he had instructed them. So we read, *All the Prophets and the Law prophesy'd until John*, *Mat.* 11. 13. after whom the *Messias* or Son of God appear'd, whose Birth-day we now celebrate, and ever since God *hath spoken to us by his Son* ; which Son spake first to his Apostles and Disciples, and by them to us : He preach'd and expounded to them the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and they, by his Authority, and the Assistance of his holy Spirit, have taught and deriv'd down the same to us. And as *Moses* and the Prophets were faithful in God's House as Servants, to whom but little of the Master's Mind is imparted ; so was Christ faithful as a Son, to whom much more, yea his whole Mind and Will was imparted, which he as fully and faithfully communicated unto us. And for a Reward of his Fidelity in this Office, he is here said to be appointed by God to be *Heir of all things*, having all Power committed to him both in Heaven and Earth ; and likewise by him to have made the World, and to rule and govern all things in it. And this will lead me to the next thing to be consider'd, viz.

Secondly, The transcendent Glory and Greatness of this Son of God, express'd by his *being the Brightness of his Father's Glory*, and the express Image of his Person, and upholding all things by the Word of his Power : which high and lofty Expressions help to set forth the infinite Glory of his divine Nature, and shew him to have one and the same Essence with the Father, tho issuing from him as Beams of Light do from the Sun, and resembling him in all his Perfections, as the most lively Image doth the Person it represents. And by this Reflection of the Father's Brightness and Likeness upon the Son, we obtain in some measure the Sight of him, who is otherwise invisible. So *St. John* tells us, *No Man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declar'd him* ; *John* 1. 18. and that so clearly, that he told *Philip*, who desir'd to see the Father, that

he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; John 14. 9. he being the perfect Picture and Pourtraiture of him.

Now the Lustre of this Divine Glory was too bright for any either to behold or describe, and this express lively Image of the Father's Person too glorious to be seen or express'd. Our weak Eyes cannot bear or behold the Brightness of the Sun, and much less can the Eyes of our Understanding behold the glorious Splendor of this Sun of Righteousness: a Glimpse hereof some of the Disciples had at his Transfiguration; at which time *his Face did shine as the Sun, and his Rayment was white as the Light*: the great Splendor whereof dazzled the Eyes of the Disciples, and confounded both their Sight and their Minds too; for *they fell on their Face, and were sore afraid*, as we read, *Mat. 17.*

Now this Son of God being to teach and instruct Mankind in the Will of his Father, condescended to our Weakness, and was pleas'd for awhile to lay aside his Glory, which we could not bear or behold, and to clothe himself in our Flesh, that he might become visible unto us, and speak and converse with us in a way suitable to our Nature and Condition. We read that *Moses* had once the Curiosity to desire God to *shew him his Glory*; but God answer'd him, *Thou canst not see my Face, and live; that Sight will over-power thee, and is too glorious for this mortal State to bear*: *Exod. 33. 18, 20.* And when the People went up to the Mount, to see and hear God speaking unto them, they were struck with sudden Fears and Tremblings, and beseech'd God, that he would speak no more unto them, but to send and speak by his Servant *Moses*, and they would hear. In like manner, should the Son of God speak to Mankind in the Glory of his Godhead, they would not be able to see or hear them; the Lustre of his Divine Nature and Presence would confound and marr all the Effect of his Doctrine; and therefore he vouchsaf'd to take our Nature upon him, that he might speak like one of us, and we might be able to hear and learn from him.

This is the Person by whom God now speaks to us in these last Days: who tho as God, he is here said to *uphold all things by the Word of his Power*, and to keep them from sinking into Ruin and Confusion; yet as Man, he is said to suffer, and die, and sink into the Grave for us, that by his Blood he might purge away our Sins: and *when he had by himself done that, he return'd to Heaven, from whence he came, and sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high.* Which will lead,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To his exceeding, great and high Preheminence above the Angels; For to which of the Angels said he at any time, *Sit thou at my Right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footstool?* Ver. 13. This was an Honour peculiar to the Son of God, and was never confer'd on any of the Angels. This was foretold by the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. 52. 13. *Behold my Servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be set very high:* which Words are generally interpreted of the Messiah, and signify that he should be made superior to the Angels, and plac'd much higher than they, namely, at God's Right Hand. Again,

2dly, The Name and Titles given to him were much higher than any that were given to the Angels; so the next Words tell us, *Being made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by Inheritance obtain'd a more excellent Name than they;* that is, he is advanc'd to a Superiority over the Angels, by far higher and more honourable Titles and Appellations than were ever bestow'd on them: for it follows, *Unto which of the Angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee?* which is quoted from *Psal* 2. 7. And again, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son,* quoted out of *2 Sam.* 7. 11. in both which Places he is stil'd the Son of God in a more sublime and eminent manner than was ever said of any other. Again,

3dly, The Preheminence of Christ above the Angels is set forth by the Worship and Service they were commanded by God to pay him, as the next words declare, *When he bringeth in his first-begotten into the World, he saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him:* this is quoted out of *Psal.* 97. 7. where 'tis said, *Worship him all ye Gods;* that is, not only all the Idol Gods of the Heathens, but the Angels, and all that are call'd Gods. Accordingly we read, that at our Saviour's Nativity, the Angels and the whole Heavenly Host brake forth into singing, sounding out that Celestial Hymn, *Glory to God on High, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men;* *Luke* 2. 13, 14. and after went and paid their Worship and Adoration to the Child lying in the Manger; which was a full Acknowledgment of his high Eminence and Superiority over them. Besides which, for farther Confirmation, 'tis added,

4thly, To the Angels he saith, *Who maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a Flame of Fire:* this is quoted out of *Psal.* 104. 4. where the same words are prophetically spoken of Christ;

Christ; the Sense whereof is, that the Angels are all at his Beck and Command, and ready to minister to him upon all Occasions.

But Lastly, There is one thing more that exalts him far above the Angels, and all Principalities and Powers; and that is, that he is God blessed for ever, and an eternal King; whose Throne is everlasting, and his Scepter a Scepter of Righteousness: so the next words describe him; *But unto the Son he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a Scepter of Righteousness is the Scepter of thy Kingdom.* This is taken out of *Psal. 45. 6, 7.* where the following words of this Epistle are likewise found, *viz. Thou hast loved Righteousness, and hated Iniquity; therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the Oil of Gladness above thy Fellows.* Which shews how he executeth his Kingdom, and that is, by promoting of Righteousness, and suppressing Iniquity both by his Doctrine and Example; to which ends, God hath given him all Fulness of Grace, that all may receive of him according to their Capacity.

Thus we see the high Preheminence of the Son of God, who was born to us this Day, and by whom God now speaks to us, above the Angels and all other created Beings. From whence I proceed,

Fourthly, To the last thing to be consider'd in this Epistle, which concludes with two great Attributes and Perfections of this Son of God; to wit, the Omnipotence of his Power, and the Immutability of his Person and Kingdom. The former is in these words, *Thou Lord hast laid the Foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thy Hands;* ver. 10. which shew his Divine and Almighty Power, and that he was the Maker, as well as Saviour of the World. The latter is in these words, *They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old, as doth a Garment, and as a Vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy Years shall not fail:* meaning, that tho all other things perish, and come to an end, tho they wear out like a Garment, tho they are folded up and chang'd like a Vesture; yet he remains immutable, and of his Government there shall be no end.

Thus I have shew'd you in some measure the Glory and Greatness of the Messiah, or Son of God; whose Coming into the World we remember this Day, together with his high

high Preheminence above the Angels, and how vastly he excels all others in his Glorious and Divine Perfections. From all which we may infer a few Lessons by way of Application: And,

(1.) From God's speaking to us now by his Son, we learn the great Excellency of the Gospel-Revelations above those of the Law, and that with respect to the Persons that reveal'd them, together with the Matter, Manner and End of the Revelations: in all which, the Discoveries made to us in the New Testament far transcend those of the Old.

For the Persons, the Revelations of the Gospel came from Christ the Son of God blessed for ever; of whom all the Prophets prophesy'd.

The Revelations under the Law came from Men subject to Infirmities, who knew nothing but what they receiv'd from him.

For the Matter, the Revelations of the Old Testament were slow and imperfect; the Prophets prophesy'd in part, *here a little, and there a little*, something at one time, and something at another: but the Son of God, who lay in the Bosom of the Father, and knew all his Secrets, hath declar'd to us his whole Will altogether, and given us an entire and compleat Revelation of his Mind, and the Means of our Salvation.

For the Manner, the Revelations of the Old Testament were deliver'd in dark Types and Shadows, and so were very obscure, and understood only by a few; but the Discoveries of the Gospel are clear, open and unveil'd, and the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appear'd unto all Men.

Then for the End, the Law was only a Schoolmaster to lead unto Christ; it made nothing perfect, but consisted only of weak and beggarly Elements, which were but Shadows of good things to come: but Christ was the End of the Law for Righteousness, the Prophecies all tended to, and terminated in him, who blest the World with better and brighter Revelations than were ever known before.

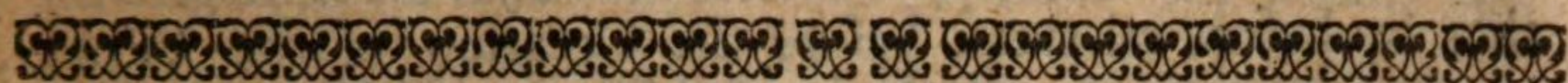
(2.) If God speaks now to us by his Son, then it must be our Duty and Wisdom to hearken to him; for if God find a Tongue to speak, sure we ought to find Ears to hear. This, *Moses's* Precept as well as Prediction may teach us: for when he foretold of a Prophet, that *God would raise up in the last Days*, not only like unto, but much greater than he; 'twas added, *and to him ye shall hearken*, Deut. 18. 18. To this we are admonish'd by a Call from Heaven at his Transfiguration, when a Voice sounded from the excellent Glory, saying, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*; Mat. 17. And indeed he only

only hath the Words of eternal Life, and hath shew'd himself to be a Teacher come from God, as well by the Excellence of his Doctrine, as the Greatness of his Works; and therefore we are diligently to attend to him, now speaking to us by his Ministers.

(3.) From God's speaking to us by his Son, we may learn the Danger of rejecting the Doctrine deliver'd by him: for *if the Words spoken by Angels were stedfast* (saith the Apostle) *and every Transgression of Moses's Law receiv'd a just Recompence of Reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which was first spoken by the Lord, and after confirm'd by them that heard him?* Heb. 2. 2, 3. And elsewhere, If they escaped not who refus'd him that spake on Earth, how much less shall we escape, if we refuse him that speaketh from Heaven?

Lastly, From his being born into the World, to teach and to save us, let us learn for ever to remember him, and that too in the Holy Sacrament, which he instituted himself for his own Remembrance. The Birth-days of Princes have been ever kept with Feasts and Festival Solemnities: Accordingly the Son of God, because he would not be forgotten by us, hath prepar'd a Feast to preserve and perpetuate his Memory: Let us therefore draw nigh to his Holy Table, where all things are ready to remember his Birth and Death, and where he hath promis'd to meet us, to convey to us the Benefits and Blessings of both; which if we do now, we shall be for ever remember'd by him hereafter.





DISCOURSE X.

The G O S P E L for *Christmas-Day.*

St. John i. 1 — 14.

In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the Beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of Men, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day of Christ's Nativity represents him to us both in his Divine and Human Nature: by the one, he is equal with God; by the other, he is made like unto Men: both which are mention'd by St. Paul, who tells us, that he *being in the Form of God, and thinking it no Robbery to be equal with God, was made also in the Likeness of Men, and took upon him the Form of a Servant:* Phil. 2. 6, 7. both which are more largely set forth in this Gospel. As he is God, he is stil'd here *the Word, the Life, and the Light of the World;* which glorious Titles are given to him in a way peculiar to him, and not to be affirm'd of any other. As he is Man, he is said to *be made Flesh, and to dwell among us;* the Gospel begins with the one, and ends with the other.

The Beginning describes the Godhead of Christ in as high and lofty a Strain as Words can reach, tho infinitely below the Greatness and Dignity of the Subject; saying, *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:* where by *the Word* is generally understood the Son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity, and shews his proceeding from the Father in an unaccountable manner, as a Word doth from the Mouth that utters it. In the Epistle for the Day, God is said to *speak to us by his Son,* who is therefore stil'd, *The Word of God;* and that too, because he only hath the Words of Eternal Life.

This

This Word is here said to be *in and from the Beginning*; that is, before all time, before the Creation of the World, or any thing in it, he had a Subsistence with the Father: and this shews the Eternity of the Son of God, who is therefore said to be *begotten of the Father before all Worlds*. The Psalmist expresses it thus; *Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever the Earth or the World were form'd, thou art God from Everlasting, and World without end*; Psal. 90. 2. by which it appears that the Son is Coequal and Coeternal with the Father. Again, it is said,

That *this Word was with God*; that is, the Son ever existed and operated with him in the same Divine Nature, and so is truly said to be both Co-eternal and Co-existing with the Father. Moreover, 'tis said,

That *this Word was God*; meaning, that he had the same Divine Essence, and that *the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily*, and so was not only Co-eternal and Co-existing, but Co-essential with the Father.

Again, lest any from hence should divide the Deity, or frame any false Conception of more Gods than one, he repeats his former Assertion, saying, *The same was in the Beginning with God*; meaning, that he was ever one and the same with the Father, without any Division or Multiplication of Deities. Furthermore,

Lest any should conceive the Creation of the World, or the making all things out of nothing, to be too divine and difficult a Work to be attributed to the Word or Son of God, 'tis added in the next Verse, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*. Where the Creation of the World, the proper and peculiar Work of God, to be effected only by a Divine Power, is in plain Terms ascrib'd to the Son. That he was with God at the making of Man, and concur'd with him, is evident from that Saying, *Come let us make Man in our Image, and after our Likeness*. And the Scripture tells us, that *God made all things by his Word*; that is, by his Divine Son: for *God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light*. And so, by the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth. From whence we understand (saith the Apostle) that *the Heavens were fram'd by the Word of God*; which is the same with what is affirm'd in the Epistle for this Day, that *God by his Son made the Worlds*, Heb. 1. 3.

This is the first great Title here given him, being stil'd *the Word*; which I have briefly explain'd, without running
into

into the abstruse and mysterious Speculations about the *Λόγος*.

The next Verse gives him two Divine and Sublime Titles more ; to wit, the Life, and the Light of Men, in these words, *In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of Men.* In him was Life ; that is, originally and independently, having Life in and from himself, and from no other ; in which sense he is often stil'd *the living God*. And he is the Fountain of Life, to derive it to all living Creatures ; for *in him we live, move, and have our Being*. Hence we find him declaring of himself, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life* ; John 14. 6. He is *the Way*, by leading us to the Father ; *the Truth*, by revealing him to us ; *the Life*, by quickening us to a Spiritual and Eternal Life. Moreover,

This Life is said to be *the Light of Men*. His Light sprung by an eternal Emanation from the Father, as Light doth from the Body of the Sun ; and by the bright Beams of his Doctrine enlightens the World in the Knowledg of God, and the Way that leads to Everlasting Life : call'd therefore *the Light of Life*, John 8. 12. But *this Light shined* a long time in *Darkness*, and *the Darkness comprehended it not* ; that is, Christ by his Prophets sent this Light to the Jews of old, and likewise to the benighted Gentiles ; but their Darkness was so thick and gross, that they discern'd but little by it, as the Eye that is cover'd with a Film can see nothing by the outward Light : they had almost extinguish'd the Light of Nature and Reason, and the Light of Revelation was so dim to them, that they could not see the Way to Life and Salvation.

This was the dark and gloomy State of the World, before this *Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his Wings* ; which in the Fulness of Time he did to the benighted World, and like the Day-spring from on high visited it with his Salvation.

But before he appear'd, *there was a Man sent from God, whose Name was John* ; the same came before for a Witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all Men thro him might believe. He was as the Morning-Star to this Sun, to give notice and to usher this Light into the World, that they might be ready to behold and welcome his Appearance, and by believing in him, receive the Benefit of his Light. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light*. This Star would not take upon him to be the Sun ; tho the gazing Multitude look'd upon him as so, yet he did not move out of his Orb, nor act beyond his Sphere. This Forerunner disclaim'd
all

all Pretences to be the Messiah: yea, he takes solemn Witness of his Denial of it, and appeals to the *Jews* themselves about it, saying, *Ye your selves bear me witness, that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him*; John 3. 28. In comparison of him, St. *John* debas'd himself beneath the lowest Servant, and counted himself unworthy of the meanest Office: for he being earthly, did only *speake of the Earth*, that is, low and mean things; whereas the *Messias coming from Heaven*, spake of greater and more heavenly Mysteries, ver. 31. of that Chapter: by which it appears that *John* was not that Light, neither did he any way take it upon him; but the whole End of his Mission and Office was to testify, that *Christ was the true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*: he it was that scatter'd the bright Beams of Light, by which the World is cherish'd and directed in the Paths of Life.

Now this Word or Son of God *was from the Beginning in the World* (as the next Verse tells us) and in so eminent a manner too, that *the World* was made and preserv'd by him, and yet *the World* knew him not; so stupid were the Generality of Men, as not to own or take notice of him. Yea, after he had manifested himself by his Doctrine and Miracles, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*: where by *his own* are meant the People of the *Jews*, the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*, to whom he was first sent; call'd his own, partly because they were his own Countrymen and Kindred; for he came of the Race of the *Jews*, being born of *Abraham's* Seed, and descending from the Loins of *David*; and partly because they were his own peculiar People, sever'd from the rest of the World, and advanc'd above them by many great and noble Privileges: for to them appertain'd the Adoption, the giving of the Law, and the Promises; theirs were the Fathers, of whom as concerning the *Flesh Christ* came, who is over all, *God blessed for ever*. Rom. 9. 4, 5. These were the Persons here stil'd *his own*, to whom *Christ* came.

But what Usage did he meet with from them? Why that the next words tell us, *they receiv'd him not*; yea, they were so far from receiving, that they utterly rejected him, despising his Person, refusing his Doctrine, and contemning his Miracles, and at last crucify'd him, putting to death this Lord of Glory. Of the *Jews* wilful rejecting of *Christ*, and their obstinate persisting in Infidelity and Rebellion against him, notwithstanding all the powerful Methods us'd to re-claim

claim and save them, the Holy Scriptures are so full and express, that I need not say any more of it.

But tho the main Body of the *Jews* rejected him, and were for that reason rejected of him, yet there was a Remnant of them that receiv'd and submitted to him as their Lord and King, and were for that reason receiv'd into Favour, and sav'd by him. So the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold of them; *chap. 10. 21, 22. Tho the Number of the Children of Israel be as the Sand of the Sea, a Remnant shall be saved:* and so it prov'd in the Event; for *St. John* here tells us in the next Verse, *As many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God; even to them that believe on his Name:* meaning, that as many as adher'd to him by Faith, and took him for their Saviour, were taken into his Family, and made the adopted Sons and Children of God. And what an Honour and Happiness that is, to be so nearly related to a Father so good, so powerful, so wise, and every way so able to supply our Wants, and to exceed our very Wishes, is a Privilege too great to be expected or conceiv'd: and therefore *St. John*, upon mentioning of it, breaks out into Wonder and Amazement, saying, *Behold! what manner of Love the Father hath bestow'd upon us, that we should be call'd the Sons of God.* And having mention'd this high and noble Privilege of being made the Sons of God, he adds something of the Rise and Original of this Relation, which is not founded on any natural Descent or Consanguinity, but merely on the Grace and Favour of God in adopting us to it; for so the next words declare, that we are Sons of God, *born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God;* that is, not by any way of human Generation, or carnal Propagation, but by a spiritual Regeneration to a new and better Life, begetting in us a Likeness to himself.

And then it follows, that the *Word* before spoken of, and by which all this is done; that *Word*, I say, *was made Flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* These Words containing the great Mystery of the Incarnation, or the Son of God's being made manifest in the Flesh, the Subject of this Day's Festival, must be a little more insisted on, that we may the better understand the Miracle of Mercy couch'd in it, the many Benefits we receive by it, and the great Duties that result from it. And,

1st, *St. John* here tells us, that *the Word was made Flesh;* that is, that Divine Person who was of the same Nature with

the Father, vouchsaf'd to be made of the same Nature with us. He who made the World, and had a Being long before all Worlds, was pleas'd in the Fulness of Time to be born, and to be made Man like unto us; and *as Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he likewise took part of the same.* In this Flesh he is said,

2dly, To dwell among us, and in our human Nature to converse with us; the Word in the Original is ἐσκήνωσε ἐν ὑμῖν, he took up his Tabernacle in our Flesh, and pitched his Tent among us: where there is an Allusion to those Appearances that God made to the *Israelites* in the Old Testament; and the Expression signifies, that the same Divinity that then resided in the Tabernacle, and fill'd the Ark of the Testimony, had now chosen a human Body for his Tabernacle; and this Tabernacle was like ours, movable and mortal, in which he sojourn'd awhile as in a Tent, and then remov'd to his former Habitation. Again,

3dly, St. John tells us, that *they beheld his Glory*; where he farther alludes to that shining Glory in which God appear'd to the *Israelites* in the Ark, and in the Tabernacle, call'd by the *Hebrews*, *Shecinah*, the Habitation and Presence of God; in *Greek* δόξα, Glory, representing his glorious Presence. Hence we often read in Scripture, that *the Glory of the Lord appeared*, Numb. 10. 16, 42. meaning, that his Presence was render'd visible and conspicuous to them. In Rev. 21. the *New Jerusalem* is call'd *the Tabernacle of God with Men*, in which he dwelt with them, *having the Glory of God*, or the Splendor of his Presence; so that *the City had no need of Sun or Moon to shine in it, for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof*, ver. 3, 11, 23. Now this Appearance of God in the Flesh being the most visible and remarkable Appearance, wherein he ever exhibited himself to the World, 'tis here express'd by the *Shecinah*, by taking up his Tabernacle among us, and exhibiting his Glory to us: for *we beheld his Glory* (saith St. John) meaning, that thro the Veil of his Flesh there appear'd such Beams of Majesty, as plainly shew'd the Sun was there; which could no otherwise be made visible to our bodily Eyes, but by the Refraction of a Cloud. Moreover,

4thly, This Glory is said to be *the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*; meaning, that it was not such as was seen in *Moses's* and *Stephen's* Countenance, a sudden transient Flash, but a permanent and abiding Glory; it was not like that of a Servant, nor yet of an adopted Son, but this
Glory

Glory was every way such as well became, and was fit for the only-begotten and true natural Son of God.

But how was this Glory manifested? Why, sundry ways; by a Star at his Birth, by a Voice from Heaven at his Baptism, by the shining of his Face at his Transfiguration, by the Light of his Doctrine, by the Lustre of his Miracles, by the Power of his Resurrection, and the Glory of his Ascension; with many other ways, which shew'd him to be the only-begotten Son of God in the Form and Nature of a Man.

Lastly, 'Tis said of him, that he was *full of Grace and Truth*: lest the Greatness of his Glory should astonish and affright, he is said to be full of Grace and Favour to allure and invite to him; and that we may not fear of being mistaken or misled by him, he is said to be full of Truth as well as Grace, being, as the Evangelist elsewhere declares him, *Via, Veritas & Vita*; the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Others understand these Words with relation to the Law as deliver'd by *Moses*, and the Gospel as deliver'd by Christ; the Law was full of Terror, Rigor and Curses; the Gospel full of Grace and Mercy: the former full of Shadows and Ceremonies; the latter full of Truth, the Substance and Completion of them. To this *St. John* seems to direct, *ver. 17. of this Chapter: The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.* And all this by the Word's being made Flesh, and dwelling among us; of whose Appearance, this Day of his Nativity, which we now commemorate, was the first, and contains the greatest Miracle of Mercy that was ever done for the Sons of Men; the Benefits whereof are too many and too great to be either related or conceiv'd: for hereby the Son of God became the Son of Man, to make us the Sons of God; and 'tis beyond the reach of any Capacity to comprehend the farther end of the Happiness of that Relation: for tho now we are the Sons of God, yet it doth not yet appear what we shall be, only that we shall be like him, that we shall see him as he is, and shall know him, even as we are known. Christ having taken our Flesh, hath thereby endear'd us to him, he being now *Flesh of our Flesh, and Bone of our Bone*: *no Man ever hated his own Flesh* (saith the Apostle) *but loveth and cherisheth it, as Christ doth his Church.* All Flesh may now come to him, who is now one of us, and may come with the greater Boldness, having an Advocate and Mediator made like unto us; he being full of Grace and Truth, we may well hope that his Grace will prevent us, and his Truth follow us all the days of our Life.

This is that *great Mystery of Godliness* spoken of by St. Paul, 1 Tim. 3. 16. *God was manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory:* which things are the Subject of this Day's Gospel, and ought to be the Subject of this Day's Meditation. From whence I proceed, in the last place, to the Duties that result from it: and they are,

(1.) To admire and adore the infinite Love and Goodness of God in this astonishing Condescension, that he who was one with the Father, and of the same Divine Nature with him, should stoop so low, as to assume our human Nature, and not only take our Flesh, but all the Weaknesses and Infirmities of it, as to Hunger and Thirst, to be weary and sleep, to be sorrowful and weep, to bleed and die; and all this for our sakes: This is a Mercy too big for Words, and is to be express'd only with Extasy and Admiration.

(2.) Let us contemplate the infinite Power and unsearchable Riches of Divine Wisdom in this Transaction; that God should find out a way to reconcile Sinners to himself by his Son's taking upon him sinful Flesh, and thereby satisfy in the same Nature that offended; by which means Justice and Mercy met together, and Righteousness and Peace have kiss'd each other. This is such a Project as the Heart of Man could never conceive, much less could the Head of Man ever contrive it. Nothing but infinite Wisdom could bring it to mind, and nothing but infinite Power could bring it to pass; 'tis a Depth which the Angels desire to pry into, 1 Pet. 1. 12. and is therefore much more to be contemplated and admir'd by us, who are more nearly concern'd in it.

(3.) From the Word's being made Flesh, and dwelling among us, let us learn to keep it the more pure and undefil'd from fleshly Lusts. *Shall I take the Members of Christ* (saith the Apostle) *and make them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid!* much less should we prostrate that Flesh to vile Purposes, that hath been so highly advanc'd to a Union with the Godhead.

Lastly, Let us celebrate this mysterious Union of our Nature with his in that Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, ordain'd on purpose for a Memorial of it. The Word was made Flesh only to make us Partakers of his Holy Spirit, which is only convey'd to us in that Holy Feast appointed for that end: there we may behold that Flesh torn, and that Blood pour'd out, which he assum'd merely to make our Peace; and shall we refuse to remember and rejoice in that
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Atonement? Rather let us take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord, who thus humbled himself for our Exaltation: Let us compass his Altar with Praises and Thanksgivings, and offer our selves to him, who thus freely offer'd and united himself to us; that being made one with him, we may for ever dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XI.

The EPISTLE for St. Stephen's Day.

Acts vii. 55. to the end.

Stephen being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing on the Right Hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the Right Hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud Voice and stopped their Ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the City, and stoned him, &c.

ST. Stephen being the first Martyr for the Christian Religion, hath his Memory celebrated the next Day after our Saviour's Nativity; for about that time of the Year he laid down his Life in the Cause of Christ, and so led the Van of that noble Army of Martyrs that follow'd after.

He was one of the Deacons chosen by the Apostles, to serve in the lower Ministrations of the Church, as we read, *Acts 6. 5.* and was suppos'd to be one of the *seventy Disciples whom Christ sent forth as Sheep among Wolves*, having his Lot, among many of the rest, to be worried and persecuted to death by them.

The Collect for the Day minds us, both of the Vertues and the Sufferings of St. Stephen, who *stedfastly looked up to Heaven,*

Heaven, and by Faith beheld there the Glory that shall be reveal'd: And from thence teaches us to pray for Grace, by his Example, to love and bless our Persecutors, who prayed for his Murderers to the blessed Jesus, who stands at the Right Hand of God, to succour all those that suffer for him.

The Epistle for the Day, out of which the Collect was taken, calls to our Remembrance and Imitation the same things. In which we may observe,

First, The Character here given of St. Stephen; which is, his being full of the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, What it was that encourag'd him to persevere in the Faith of Christ; and that was, his Heavenly Vision.

Thirdly, What it was that enrag'd his Persecutors against him; and that was, a Pretence of his being a Blasphemer.

Fourthly, His pious Carriage and Behaviour under his Sufferings; which was, his praying for himself and his Murderers.

And, *Lastly, The happy End and Reward of his Sufferings; which was, a Rest from all his Troubles, and the Fruition of the highest Felicity. These things contain the Substance of this Epistle, and deserve to be particularly handled. And I begin,*

First, With the Character given of St. Stephen, who is here said to be full of the Holy Ghost; that is, plentifully endow'd with the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, abounding in the Knowledg of Divine Truths, accompanied with Elocution to enforce his Arguments for the Conviction or silencing of Gainsayers. In the sixth Chapter of the Acts, ver. 8, 9. he is said to be full of Faith and Power, and did great Wonders and Miracles among the People: his Mind was fortify'd with a full Assurance and Confidence in God, and his Words were back'd with the Demonstration of the Spirit and Power; insomuch, that in his Dispute with the Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, they were not able to resist the Wisdom, and the Spirit with which he spake: the Word of God in his Mouth being like a two-edged Sword in his Hand, piercing and dividing asunder the Soul and the Spirit, and reaching to the Discerning of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart; Heb. 4. 12. In short, our Saviour made good to St. Stephen, what he promis'd to his Disciples, bidding them not to fear their being called before Magistrates, nor to meditate before-hand what they should

should answer ; for he would *give them a Mouth and Wisdom, which all their Adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist ;* Luke 21. 14, 15. This St. Stephen found, and his Adversaries felt, who were not able to withstand that Evidence and Strength of Reason, that Freedom and Majesty of Elocution, with which he enforc'd all that he said ; but went away baffled and ashamed in all their Attempts.

Secondly, But what was it that thus encourag'd St. Stephen, and inspir'd him with this Boldness and Courage in all his Trials ? Why, that was partly from the Divine Assistance he receiv'd from the Holy Spirit, with which we read he was filled ; and partly from a heavenly Vision, with which his Eyes were bless'd : For the next words tell us, that *he looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at the Right Hand of God.* Whether this were a real Vision communicated to his bodily Eyes, or only some strong Impression made upon his Imagination, whereby a Glimpse of the Glories of Heaven was in a lively manner represented to him ; is not easy, nor perhaps necessary for us to determine. Some think, that he had some bright and sensible Appearances of the Divine Majesty, and the Glory of his Son made to him ; others, that it was but an Image of it created by God by a supernatural Elevation of his Mind, and abstracting it from the Senses and Organs of the Body, like Men in a Trance or Extasy, whose Minds are transported or rais'd above their ordinary pitch. However that be, most certain it is, that this was something of more than ordinary, and a miraculous Vision ; in which Stephen, by a supernatural Light and Virtue, did see into Heaven, and beheld that Splendor and Majesty with which Christ is clothed there, together with the glorious Appearance of Angels about the Throne of God, and his Son at his Right Hand. This blessed Sight so ravish'd and transported him, that he could not forbear discovering and imparting it to his very Adversaries ; saying, *Behold, I see the Heavens open'd, and the Son of Man standing at the Right Hand of God.* He saw the Heavens cleaving asunder, as it were drawing a Curtain, and opening a Scene to give his Eye a Prospect of the Glory of the Celestial Mansions ; where he beheld God the Father sitting on his Throne, and God the Son not sitting, as he is usually describ'd, but standing at his Right Hand in a Posture of Defence, ready to help and succour

those that stand by and suffer for him. Which glorious Prospect made him regardless of what was done here below, and fill'd him with Longings to arrive at that happy Place, where so great and unutterable a Blessedness was reserved for him; which made him despise both the Glories and Sufferings of this present Life. Indeed, the thoughts of Heaven are able to entertain and delight us in the want of all earthly Comforts; and if we have an Eye to that, those Divine Consolations will be ever nearest to us, when human Assistances are farthest off. So it was with St. Stephen, whose Vision of Heaven inspir'd him with that Zeal and Courage, which bore him up and carry'd him on above all earthly Discouragements. And therefore the Author to the *Hebrews* hath prescrib'd the *looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith*; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross and despised the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God, as the best means to keep us from weariness and fainting in our Minds, *Heb. 12. 2, 3.* And those many Worthies mention'd in the foregoing Chapter, memorable for the great Atchievements of their Faith, did and suffer'd all, by having an Eye to the Recompence of Reward. 'Twas this Prospect that made St. Paul reckon the Sufferings of this present Life, not worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with the Glory that shall be revealed in us; *Rom. 8. 18.* So that a firm Belief, and a frequent sight of the Glories of Heaven, by the Eye of Faith, is the best Support under all the Sufferings that can befall us here on Earth.

Thirdly, But this heavenly Vision in the Text, had very different Effects upon different Persons; that which encourag'd St. Stephen, did but exasperate and enrage his Persecutors. The Sun that melts the Wax, hardens the Clay; and the Fire which gently warms at a distance, scorches when it comes too near. The Consciences of the Adversaries being sensibly touch'd and stung by the near approach of the Truths deliver'd by St. Stephen, made them fume and fret, and fall into the fiercest Fury and Rage against him: for they presently cried out with a loud Voice, and stopped their Ears, and ran upon him with one accord; and cast him out of the City, and stoned him, as a Blasphemer, for speaking against *Moses* and against God. Where we may note,

1st, Their crying out with a loud Voice all together, signified, that all this was done in a tumultuous way, by the rude Noise and Accusation of the People, without any due course of Law or Justice; and so he was, like his Saviour, sacrific'd by the Clamours and Crucifige's of the Multitude. They suborn'd false Witnesses to charge him with Blasphemy, and what they could not effect by Truth, they sought to compass by Falshood; and therefore they stay'd not for any Warrant from the Roman Governour, to whom the Power of Execution belong'd, nor for the Sentence of the Sanhedrim, without which they could not put any to death; but acted herein the part of those Zealots, who were wont to execute Vengeance upon capital Offenders, without staying for the ordinary Course of Justice. So wild and furious a thing is misguided Zeal!

2^{dly}, They are said to have stopped their Ears, partly from an unwillingness to hear the loud Noise and Clamours of the People; and partly, to be deaf to all Cries for Mercy.

3^{dly}, They are said to run upon him with one accord; i. e. they cruelly and unanimously rush'd upon him without order, and without pity. After which they,

4^{thly}, Cast him out of the City: their Zeal had in it a mixture of Superstition; for they would not execute him within the Walls, for fear of polluting the holy City with his Blood, and therefore hurry'd him out of the Gates of the City, where the Executions of Malefactors were wont to be perform'd.

And there, lastly, They stoned him; falling upon him with a shower of Stones, to crush and batter him to death.

And the Witnesses laid down their Clothes at a young Man's Feet, whose name was Saul. The Witnesses that gave Evidence against any, were, by the Law, to throw the first Stone at him; Their Hands were to be first upon him, to put him to death, Deut. 17. 7. Accordingly, the Witnesses that were hir'd and suborn'd against Stephen, put off their upper Garments to make them the more nimble and fit for their Work; a young Man standing by, named Saul, holding their Clothes, or laying them at his Feet till they had finish'd their Work. Which thing shew'd him to consent to and approve of what they did, and so made him guilty of St. Stephen's Death, as we read, Acts 8. 1. an Action we find him after acknowledging with bitter Tears and Grief; saying, *When the Blood of thy Martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his Death, kept the Raiment*

Raiment of them that slew him, Acts 22. 20. Thus they acted this Tragedy upon him; for *they stoned Stephen, calling upon God.* And this will lead me,

Fourthly, To the next thing propounded, *viz.* To consider the Carriage and Behaviour of *St. Stephen* under this sharp and heavy Trial: and that was, not only with invincible Meekness and Patience, but likewise with the most pious and fervent Devotion; for he was upon his Knees all the while they lifted up their Hands against him, and sent his Prayers faster up to Heaven, than they could rain down Stones upon him upon Earth: *They stoned Stephen, calling upon God.* Stoning was one of the greatest and most grievous Punishments among the *Jews*, and was never inflicted but for the highest and most heinous Offences; such as Blasphemy, Idolatry, and the like: which being executed on the Martyr of this Day without any Guilt, he bore it without any Resentment or Remorse; and instead of being mov'd to Rage or Revenge, he return'd it only with Patience and Prayers. He call'd upon God to shew Mercy to them, whilst they were calling upon each other to shew their utmost Cruelty towards him.

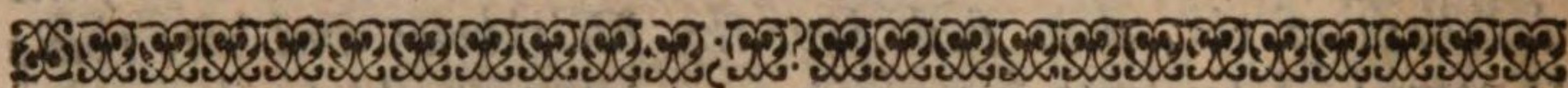
His calling upon God was, first for himself, and after for his Persecutors. Charity, which begins at home, taught him first to pray for himself; saying, in the extremity of his Sufferings, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit.* In which he follow'd the Example of our Saviour's Prayer on the Cross, who then *cried with a loud Voice, and said, Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit,* Luke 23. 46. And indeed nothing can be fitter than to resign up our selves to him, when he in his Providence seems to call for us. From these great Examples we are taught, in Holy Scripture, *whenever we suffer any thing according to God's Will, to commit the keeping of our Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator;* 1 Pet. 4. 19. So did holy David, who in his greatest Troubles said, *Into thine Hand I commend my Spirit, for thou hast redeemed me,* Psal. 31. 6. And this is more especially to be done in the last and forest Sufferings at the point of Death; for having receiv'd our Souls at God's hands, we are to deliver them back again at his call; and when the Body returns to the Earth from whence it came, our Spirit is to be return'd and restor'd to God that gave it. And therefore our Church teaches us to recommend the Souls of departing Persons into

into the hands of God, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour; humbly beseeching that they may be precious in his sight, and purify'd by the Blood of that immaculate Lamb, that was slain to take away the Sins of the World.

And as *Stephen* thus prayed for himself, that *God* would receive his Spirit, so did he extend his Prayers to his bitterest Enemies; for he kneeled down and cried with a loud Voice, *Lord, lay not this Sin to their charge.* In this likewise he trod in the Steps of his Saviour, who in the last Scene of his Passion on the Cross, prayed for his Crucifiers; saying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,* Luke 23. 34. To love, to forgive, and to pray for our Enemies, are Duties peculiar to Christ's Religion, for which he hath given us both his Precept and Example in his Sermon on the Mount: He tells his Disciples, that *whereas it was said by them of old, thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy; I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you: for hereby you will shew your selves the Children of the most High.* Matth. 5. 44, 45. And as he hath given us his Precept to this purpose, so hath he in his own Person set us a Pattern of this Vertue, which he practised to the height, by rendring Good for Evil to all Mankind. This excellent Example was followed to the full by the Saint of this Day, who learnt from his Saviour, to love and bless his Persecutors, and to pray for Mercy and Pardon to his very Murderers. That the Guilt of his Murder might not be laid to their charge, he cried to Heaven to stop the Cry of his Blood, and that the shedding of Christ's Blood might make an Atonement for their shedding of his. In a word, he begg'd of God not to avenge his Murder upon them, nor punish them for this Sin. And that this Prayer was heard for them that had a hand in his Blood, appears by God's special Mercy to *Saul*, who was a principal Person in it; for he was after miraculously converted, which one of the Fathers attributes to *St. Stephen's* Prayer, saying, *Si Stephanus non orasset, ecclesia Paulum non habuisset;* If *Stephen* had not prayed, the Church had not had *Paul*. With this devout and effectual Prayer he clos'd up the Days of his pious Life: for *when he had said this, he fell asleep;* that is, he had a profound Rest from all his Labours, and was rewarded with everlasting Repose, express'd here by his falling asleep: so soft a Pillow

is Death to a good Man ! so willingly doth he leave the World and lie down in Peace, as the wearied Labourer goes to his Rest.

This is briefly the Sense of this Day's Epistle : from whence we may learn, stedfastly to look up to Heaven in all our Difficulties, and by Faith to behold the Glory that shall be reveal'd ; that by the Example of *St. Stephen* we may learn Patience and Magnanimity in all our Sufferings in Christ's Cause ; and by the Pattern that both have set us, to bless and pray for our greatest Enemies, being ready to forgive all the Injuries and Affronts we receive from others, and return nothing but the good Offices of Justice and Charity. So shall we distinguish and approve our selves to be true Disciples of Christ, and shall e'er long receive from him our Reward in Heaven ; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XII.

The GOSPEL for *St. Stephen's Day*.

St. Matthew xxiii. 34. to the end.

Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and Wise-men, and Scribes ; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City ; that upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel unto the Blood of Zacharias, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day gave us an account of the Martyrdom of *St. Stephen*, who being falsely accus'd of Blasphemy against *Moses* and against God, was put to death by stoning ; which was one of the four capital Punishments among the *Jews*, inflicted only on the most heinous and enormous Offenders. By his Example we are taught Patience under the greatest Sufferings, and likewise to bless and pray for our worst and bitterest Enemies.

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The Gospel for the Day, which contains our Saviour's foretelling the sad Fate and Destruction of *Jerusalem*, acquaints us with many more that drank of St. *Stephen's* bitter Cup, and were put to death by stoning; which occasion'd the Church's selecting this Portion of Scripture to be read on this Day: in which we are told of *Jerusalem's* killing the Prophets, and stoning them that were sent to it, and of the sad Consequents that ensu'd thereupon; for it brought that utter Ruin and Destruction upon the City, as not to have one stone left upon another, as the Sequel of this Discourse will plainly discover.

In the foregoing part of this Chapter our Saviour had denounc'd many Woes against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* for their wilful Blindness and Hypocrisy, comparing them to *whited Sepulchers*, that *appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead Mens Bones and all Uncleanness*: even so they wash'd the Outside of the Cup or Platter, and polish'd the outward Garb to appear righteous before Men, but within were full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity.

Among other Instances of their Hypocrisy, he mentions their *building the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnishing the Sepulchers of the Righteous*; as if they detested the Cruelty of their Fore-fathers towards those holy Men, saying, *If we had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets*. Whereas our Saviour, who was privy to the Thoughts and Intents of their Hearts, knew them ready and inclin'd to act over the same Tragedy. Their building the Tombs of the dead Prophets, was but a Covering for their Cruelty to the living, and the garnish'd Sepulchers were but the painted Monuments of their own Hypocrisy: *Wherefore* (saith he) *ye are Witnesses unto your selves, that ye are the Children of them which kill'd the Prophets*. Your Actions plainly testify that you are the Brood of that bloody Race that murder'd the Prophets, and are still dispos'd to do the same things, thereby *filling up the measure of your Fathers Sins*: for which reason he styles them *Serpents, and a Generation of Vipers*, asking them, *How they could escape the Damnation of Hell?* And then follows the Gospel for this Day, in which I shall observe to you,

First, God's Mission, or sending his Servants and Messengers to them, in these words; Behold I send unto you Prophets, and Wise-men, and Scribes.

Secondly,

Secondly, His foretelling the hard Usage they should find from them ; some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City.

Thirdly, The great Mischief and Misery they would thereby bring upon themselves ; That upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel unto the Blood of Zacharias the Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar : which things (he tells them) should surely come upon that Generation.

Fourthly, Our Saviour's expostulating with Jerusalem, and passionately bewailing their obstinate Refusal of Mercy, saying, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gather'd thy Children together, as a Hen gathereth her Chicken under her Wings, and ye would not ? And,

Lastly, The actual Ruin and Desolation that came upon them ; Behold ! your House is left unto you desolate, &c. Of each of these briefly. And,

First, Of the Mission, or sending of God's Servants and Messengers to deliver his Mind unto the World : Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and Wise-men, and Scribes. Where we have,

1st, The Person sending, and that is God ; Behold, I send you. And,

2dly, The Persons sent, and they are Prophets, Wisemen, and Scribes : by which we are to understand all the Ministers and Messengers of Christ, whether immediately call'd and inspir'd by God, or mediately appointed and ordain'd by Men. Of the first sort were the Prophets under the Old Testament, and the Apostles under the New ; who were both immediately sent and inspir'd by the Spirit of God. Of the latter sort are Pastors, meant by the Name of Wise-men ; and Teachers, set down by the Name of Scribes, who are mediately call'd and sent by the hands of Men : of all which we read, Eph. 4. 11. They are all said to be sent by God, tho not all the same way ; some in an extraordinary, and others in a more ordinary way. In the Old Testament we read often of God's sending his Servants the Prophets, rising early and sending them ; giving them his Messages from his own Mouth, and requiring their Fidelity in delivering them. In the New Testament we find our Saviour sending forth his Apostles and Disciples, to prepare his

his way, and to publish his Doctrine to the World. And as Christ sent his Apostles, so did he impower them to send others ; which he hath promis'd still to do, and to be with them to assist and prosper them to the end of the World. By which we see the great care that God hath taken for the Edification and Salvation of his Church ; and likewise the great Obligation that lies upon all its Members to be thankful to him, and respectful to his Ministers. Thus indeed it should be, and such Honour should have all his Servants ; but it frequently proves quite otherwise. So the

Second Particular will inform us, which contains the hard Usage that the Prophets and Ministers of Christ should meet with from the World : *Some of them* (saith he) *they shall kill and crucify, and some of them they shall scourge in their Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City.* This our Saviour tells the Jews that they themselves would do, notwithstanding their seeming Hatred of the Cruelty of their Forefathers in thus using the Prophets. *Some ye shall kill* in Zeal and Fury, as they did St. Stephen, the Saint of this Day, and as they did many others, pretending they were either none or false Prophets ; which was the very thing their Fathers did before them, and which they themselves condemn'd in them. *Some, again saith he, ye shall crucify,* either doing it your selves, or pressing the Romans to do it ; as they after did to our Saviour himself, and many of his Followers, clamouring for their Crucifixion, and not ceasing their Importunity, till they had pursu'd them to Death. *Some, again, ye shall scourge in your Synagogues,* that is, in your civil and publick Judicatures, where many were order'd to be whipt, tho they were not put to death : so they dealt with St. Paul, from whom, he himself tells us, that *he receiv'd many Stripes,* 2 Cor. II. 24. Others *ye shall persecute from City to City ;* so they did many of the Apostles, who were forc'd to fly from Place to Place, to avoid the Rage and Fury of their Persecution. This our Saviour foretold would be the Carriage of the Jews towards his Messengers and Disciples, which many of them to their sorrow found and felt at their hands. Of this the Prophet *Jeremy* speaks in the Old Testament, complaining how he himself and the other Prophets were arraign'd, defamed, and persecuted even to Death, for delivering the Messages which God himself put into their mouths. And St. Paul tells us, that the Apostles and Disciples of Christ found the same under

der the New, being haled before Magistrates, and persecuted in every City; and instead of being us'd and esteem'd as the *Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, were reckon'd as the *Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all things*; 1 Cor. 4. 13. Neither do the Clergy find much better Usage to this day, being still expos'd to the Scorn and Contempt of a wicked and dissolute Age. This was foretold by our Saviour, who sent forth his Disciples as Sheep among Wolves, who have worry'd and persecuted them ever since. Now,

Thirdly, This ill Usage of Christ's Ministers is very offensive and provoking to him; for he takes all the Injuries and Indignities done to them as done to himself: *He that despises you (saith he) despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Which thing will be attended with a suitable and dreadful Punishment, as may be seen in the many Woes and Judgments denounc'd against *Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, for their bad Treatment of the Prophets and Apostles. And the Gospel for this Day tells us the same; wherein as he foresaw the Contempt and Persecution that would befall his Disciples, so he foretold the Vengeance that would surely ensue upon it: for they not reforming the Sins of their Fathers, but persisting in their cruel and bloody Practices, would thereby fill up the measure of their Fathers Iniquities, and bring all the innocent Blood spilt by them upon their own heads; *That upon you (saith he) may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel to the Blood of Zacharias, Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar.* The Sense of which words is, that God would avenge the innocent Blood of his Servants upon them, who were so far from abhorring, that they seem'd to approve and consent to their Fathers murdering of them, by imitating them in the like Cruelties: carrying up their Guilt as high as to righteous *Abel*, whose Blood is said to cry to Heaven for Vengeance; and bringing it down to *Zacharias*, the Son of *Baruch*, call'd sometimes *Barachias*, of whom mention is made in 2 Chron. 24. 19, 20, &c. where he is said to be the Son of *Jehoiadah*, who is suppos'd to be the same Person with *Baruch*, it being usual among the Jews for the same Person to have two Names. He is there said to be stoned to death, as *Stephen* was; only their last Prayer was different, for *Stephen* pray'd, *Lord, lay not this Sin to their*

their charge : but *Zacharias* said, *Lord, look upon it and require it*, ver. 21. Now Christ makes mention of him, not because he was the last of all the Prophets murder'd by the *Jews*, but because he is the last of them that were mention'd in the Books of the Old Testament. The sum is, that the Punishment due to the Shedders of all the innocent Blood of the Prophets, should light upon their heads, for persisting in and repeating the same Provocations. Adding withal, *Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this Generation* : meaning, that in that very Age all that Destruction should come upon them, that had been merited by all the bloody Butchers of God's Servants in former time, and that many then alive should live to see it. From whence our Saviour proceeds,

Fourthly, To expostulate the Matter with them, and in the most passionate strain to lament their great Obstinacy and Folly, in so wilfully refusing all the Offers of Grace and Mercy made to them ; saying in the next words, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gather'd thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chicken together under her wings, and ye would not ?* Which is as if he had said, “ O wretched and forlorn People, that have
 “ wilfully drawn such heavy Judgments and Calamities
 “ upon your heads, by your obstinate Contempt and Slaugh-
 “ ters of those Messengers that were sent to warn and re-
 “ claim you ; how many loud Calls and earnest Invitations
 “ have I given you, to bring you to Repentance, and
 “ thereby to prevent your impending Ruin ? How often
 “ have I courted you to come under the wing of my Pro-
 “ tection, where I would have shelter'd and cherish'd you,
 “ as a Hen doth her Chicken under her wing ? But ye
 “ refus'd all, you would have none of my Counsel, and
 “ have cast my Word behind your backs ; therefore is
 “ Misery coming upon you, and your Destruction is at
 “ hand.” Where their Ruin is ascrib'd to the Contempt of Christ and his Ministers, to turning the deaf ear to all their Calls and Admonitions, and, instead of minding, misusing those that preach'd to them. Hence the Prophet in the Old Testament, and the Apostle in the New, bring in God Almighty thus bespeaking the unbelieving *Jews* ; *Behold, ye Despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a Work in your days, which ye shall in no wise believe, tho a Man de-*
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clare it unto you. Hab. 1. 5. & Acts 13. 41. The Work there threatned, related to the approaching Destruction of *Jerusalem*; which for their not believing, and preventing it by Repentance, actually came upon them.

So the next words of this Gospel tell us, *Behold! your House is left unto you desolate*: that is, both your City and Temple are laid even with the ground, and your pleasant Habitations turn'd into a desolate WilderNESS: God who woo'd you by his Ministers, hath now forsaken you, and will be no more intreated; he hath withdrawn his Presence and Protection from you, whereby all things are fallen into utter Ruin. Your *killing the Prophets*, hath brought Destruction upon your selves; and your *stoning them that were sent unto you*, hath so desolated your City, as not to leave one Stone upon another: which made our Saviour, drawing nigh to the City, to weep over it, saying, *O that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong unto thy Peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For lo! thine Enemies shall come about thee, and compass thee round on every side, and lay thee even with the ground, because thou knewest not the time of thy Visitation.* Luke 19. 42, 43, &c. My Spirit (saith he) shall no longer strive with you, your time is past, and the Gates of Mercy are shut against you; and now nothing is left to you, but to bear and bewail your chosen Ruin. *For I say unto you* (saith he in the Close) *ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*: that is, after all these ineffectual Calls and Admonitions, ye shall receive no more Invitations from me; and when I am gone, ye shall see me no more till my second Coming, to take vengeance on all such as now refuse the Offers of Mercy, and reject the Means of Salvation: And tho you now deny me, and despise those that are sent to you, yet then you will be forc'd to confess me, and say, *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.*

Thus we see the Drift of this Day's Gospel; which may teach us to beware of misusing God's Ministers, and turning the deaf ear to the Messages deliver'd by them. We see what befel *Jerusalem* for their ill Usage of the Prophets, and despising those that were sent to them; which brought utter Ruin and Desolation upon them. We read likewise what befel the seven Churches of *Asia*, for not hearkning to

to the Instructions of God's Messengers, how they were for that reason depriv'd of the Light of the Gospel, and over-run with Darknes and Barbarism. Let us take warning by these Examples, and no longer slight the Persons or Admonitions of God's Ministers; but rather reverence the one, and receive the other. Instead of evil intreating of them, let us, as we are commanded, *esteem them highly in love for their Work's sake*: saying, as it is written, *How beautiful are the Feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good things!* So shall we escape the Doom of the Despisers of Christ, and receive the Reward of his faithful Servants and Followers: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XIII.

The EPISTLE for St. John the Evangelist's Day.

I John i. 1, to the end.

That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, &c. that declare we unto you, that ye also may have Fellowship with us; and truly our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your Joy may be full, &c.

WE are to celebrate this day the Memory of St. John the Evangelist, who being Christ's *beloved Disciple*, or *the Disciple whom Jesus loved*, that lean'd on his Bosom, and was admitted to the more private Passages of his Life, fitly accompanies the Festival of his Nativity.

He was born in *Galilee*, his Parents were *Zebedee* and *Salome*; he was younger Brother to St. *James*, with whom he was brought up to the Trade of fishing, and with whom

he was call'd to be a Disciple and Apostle of our Saviour.

He wrote, beside his Gospel, containing the Life and Actions of our Saviour, three Epistles, containing Love to the Brethren ; and the Book of the *Revelation*, containing some secret Mysteries relating to the Christian Church.

The Collect for the Day beseeches God to cast his bright Beams of Light upon his Church, that it being enlighten'd by the Doctrine of the blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John, we may so walk in the Light of his Truth, as at length to attain the Light of everlasting Life.

The Epistle contains the Matter, the Reason, and the End of writing his Epistles ; which were all design'd for the Good and Benefit of the Church. It begins thus ; *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you.* Which words acquaint us with the Substance and Evidence of the Divine Revelations : *That which was from the beginning,* meaning Jesus Christ, who was before all Time, and co-eternal with the Father ; that which was from the beginning in the eternal Counsels and Purposes of their Mind, and after reveal'd at sundry times by the Prophets concerning Christ, and the Method of Salvation contriv'd by him : As also what we have known to be fulfill'd of what was foretold of him, and confirm'd to us by the Testimony of our Senses ; *That which we have seen and heard of these Sacred Mysteries, declare we unto you : for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* Where he labours to strengthen our Faith, by repeating the full and clear Evidence they had of the Truth of what they relate, to wit, that Christ, who is sometimes stil'd *the Word*, sometimes *the Life*, and here *the Word of Life*, was manifested in the Flesh, and took our Nature upon him ; of which they were Eye-witnesses, and convers'd with him, and therefore declare him to you as the Spring and Fountain of that eternal Life, which was promis'd by the Father, and is by him reveal'd unto us. So that (as St. Peter elsewhere tells us) *they did not follow any cunningly-devis'd Fables, when they made known the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty ;* 2 Pet. i. 16. This they solemnly declare and testify, to beget in us the greater Assurance of these necessary and important Truths.

Thus we see the Evidence, but what was the End of their declaring these things to us? Why that, *St. John* here tells us, was,

1st, *That we also may have Fellowship with them; and truly our Fellowship* (saith he) *is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:* meaning, that we may be partakers with them of the same Faith, and the great Benefits and Privileges that accrue thereby; as to be united to that holy Church, whereof Christ is the Head, and therein to enjoy Communion with God in his holy Ordinances, to derive Grace, and Knowledg, and eternal Life from him; that by this means we may be perfectly united to God and Christ, according to our Saviour's Prayer, *John 17. 21. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, so they also may be one in us.* By which Union we may be said to have an intimate Fellowship both with the Father and the Son. Moreover, he tells us,

2dly, That another End of his writing these things, was, *that our Joy may be full;* that we may be strong in Faith, abound in Hope, and be fill'd with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. Our Faith is too apt to sink into Infidelity, our Hope to languish in Despair, and our Joy to fall into Sorrow and Sadness. Now *St. John* both here and elsewhere prescribes a Remedy for all these, viz. by having Fellowship with God and Christ, and one another. And this is done by the Word of God and Prayer; for *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God:* and by both we are begotten again unto a lively Hope, which is cherish'd and turn'd into Joy by devout Prayer. *Ask and ye shall receive* (saith our Saviour) *that your Joy may be full;* *John 16. 24.* The Psalmist speaks of *Fulness of Joy*, *Psal. 16.* and *St. Paul* of receiving of this Fulness, which is by the Feelings of God's Grace in the Joys and Comforts of the Holy Ghost. To promote this (our Apostle here tells us) was one main End of his writing this Epistle; to fulfil our Joy, that it may at length flow into those *Rivers of Pleasure, that are at God's Right Hand for evermore*, *Psal. 16. 12.* Which things are here recorded, to encourage all good Christians to be stedfast in the Faith, and to persevere in their Christian Profession.

Having thus shew'd the clear and evident Knowledg he had of these divine Truths, which were confirm'd by the

Testimony of his Senses, and likewise the End of his declaring of them, and delivering them down for the good of Posterity; he proceeds to the subject Matter contain'd in them, in the next Words: *This then is the Message, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in him is no Darknes at all.* Where he gives us a brief Summary of the Gospel preach'd by Christ, and testified by them that heard him, and is now made known unto us. The first and principal ground whereof, and the Foundation of all the rest, consists in the true Knowledg of God; *whom to know is Eternal Life*, John 17. 3. And therefore the Message here deliver'd by St. John, is to give us a right Understanding of his Nature and Will. To which end he tells us, *that God is Light, and in him is no Darknes at all.* He is of a pure spiritual Nature, shining in Truth, Holiness, and Glory; void of all Error, Falshood, or any kind of Iniquity.

Now Light is in Scripture often us'd to signify both Knowledg and Purity: And Darknes, on the other hand, is set to represent Ignorance and Impurity.

When God then is said to be *Light*, it signifies, 1st. That he is a *God of Knowledg*; so he is stiled in 1 Sam. 23. yea, he is infinite in Knowledg, and nothing can be hid from the Light thereof. *In him are hid* (saith the Apostle) *all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg*: and all the Knowledg that is in any of his Creatures, is intirely owing to and derived from him. God is the Spring and Fountain of all, call'd therefore by St. James, *The Father of Lights*, Chap. 1. 17. And as the Sun is the Source of all sublunary Light, from whom the Moon and the Stars receive it; so is God the Author and Bestower of all that Knowledg, by which our Minds are any way enlighten'd.

And as Light in Scripture signifies Knowledg, for which reason God is said to be *Light*, as having all Knowledg in and from himself; so doth it sometimes signify the most perfect and immaculate Purity. Upon which account he is said to be a *God of Purity*, and of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity: He hates all Impurity of Body or Mind, and cannot discern the least Defilement without Abhorrence and Indignation. And as his Nature is, so are his Commandments pure and free from all Pollution: *The Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law*, saith the Psalmist, *converting the Soul. The Testimonies of the Lord are sure, and give Wisdom to the Simple. The Fear of the Lord is clean,*
and

and endureth for ever. The Statutes of the Lord are pure and righteous altogether. Psal. 19. 7, 8, 9. God requireth all Purity of Heart and Life, and nothing that is otherwise can abide in his sight: for God is said to be Light in respect of Purity as well as Knowledg, and they that hope to see or enjoy him, must purify themselves even as he is pure; 1 John 3. 3.

Moreover, God is so said to be *Light*, that in him is no Darkness at all: He is all Light without the least Obscurity, and no Darkness can approach to fully the Brightness of his Glory. Now Darkness in Scripture signifies both Ignorance and Impurity; both which are to be remov'd from the Notion and Nature of God.

For, 1st, in him is no Darkness of Error or Ignorance; he that is Infinite in Knowledg and knoweth all things, can be ignorant of nothing. 'Twas the Language of an Atheist to say, *Tush, how doth God know; and is there Knowledg in the most High?* Yes, *He that made the Eye, shall not he see? And he that teacheth Man Knowledg, shall not he know?* As nothing can be impossible to an infinite Power, so nothing can be hid from infinite Wisdom; his Eye pierceth into the darkest Corners, and he knoweth the very Secrets of the Heart.

2^{dly}, In him is no Darkness of Sin or Impurity. Sin is frequently set forth by the black Name of *Darkness*, because it *hateth the Light, and cometh not to the Light, lest its Deeds should be reprov'd; John 3.* It covets Darkness in the Acting, and tends to Darkness in the Issue; and so may well be represented by that black Character. Now as the Light of the Sun dispels the Darkness of the Night, so the Light of God's Grace scatters the thick Mists of Sin and Error. So that he that hath *Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*, can have no Fellowship with God, who is the *Father of Light*: For *what Communion hath Light with Darkness? what Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? And what Concord hath Christ with Belial?* 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15. In a word, in God is the greatest Purity, Truth and Sincerity, and there is no Impurity or Unrighteousness in him; for which reason he is said to be Light, and in him is no Darkness at all.

If then we say, we have Fellowship with him, and walk in Darkness, we lye, and do not the Truth. If we pretend to be partakers of his Purity, and would be thought to have any Conformity or Communion with him, and at the same

time live in any sinful Course, or allow our selves in any Impurity, we neither speak nor act truly, but falsify both in Words and Deeds. *We lye, and do not the Truth;* we do not deal sincerely, our Practice gives the Lye to our Profession, and our Actions confute our goodliest Pretences: For a real Union and Communion with God will be ever attended with a participation of the Graces and Vertues of his Holy Spirit, and make us in some measure partakers of the Divine Nature; without which, all Pretensions to these things are no better than Falshood and Hypocrisy. And therefore

The Apostle adds in the following words, *But if we walk in the Light, as he is in the Light, we have Fellowship with him and one another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all Sin.* If we live in Purity, as he is pure, having the Love and Fear of God planted in our Hearts, and manifesting it in the outward Course of our Lives and Actions; if we walk in the Light, so as to make it shine before Men, by being Examples of Holiness and Vertue; doing nothing but what can bear the Light, and pass the Trial and Observation of the World: then do we communicate with him in the Gifts and Graces of his Holy Spirit, and resemble the Purity of our Maker. God is indeed absolutely pure in his own Nature, and a perfect Pattern of it to all his Creatures, but we are but imperfectly so by a pious Imitation of his Purity: which yet if we do what we can to follow him, he will accept of us, and look upon us as clean and pure in his sight; *For the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all Sin.* He shed his Blood on purpose to wash away the Guilt and Pollution of our Iniquities: And if we add to that, the Tears of Contrition and Repentance, it will be effectual to cleanse us from all past Sins, and to prevent the future.

But yet we must not infer from hence, that this will bring us to a State of absolute Purity and Perfection here in this Life, so as to be free from all Sin, and secure from falling into it any more: for *if we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us.* Tho the Blood of Christ cleanseth us from the Guilt of Sin, yet it doth not wholly rid us of the Being of it; for the best of us being but regenerate in part, are left to struggle here with some Remainders of Corruption. There were indeed some in the Apostles Days, as there are also in ours, who pretend to a State of Perfection, and think and say, they have

no Sin; but such do but put a Fallacy or Cheat upon themselves, which is the worst kind of Deceit, to be their own Impostors, and to be accessory to their own Delusion: *They deceive themselves, and the Truth is not in them.* For Truth it self hath told us, that *we have all sinned, and come short of the Glory of God; and that in many things we offend all.* So that to pretend otherwise, is to shew our selves void of all Truth, and to impose both upon our selves and others.

And therefore our Apostle, instead of denying, puts us upon confessing our Sins, as the best Means to obtain the Pardon of them; saying, *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.* Where the Apostle, to encourage us to the Duty, secures to us the Success; telling us, that the Faithfulness and Justice of God are engag'd to pardon our Sins, upon our penitent confessing of them: for God having made this the Condition of Forgiveness, hath thereby oblig'd himself to grant it upon the Performance of that Condition: *He is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins;* as if he could not be either without it, and that because he hath made many Promises to us to that purpose: *He that confesseth and forsaketh his Sins, shall find Mercy,* saith he, *Prov. 28. 13.* And again, *I am he that will blot out thine Iniquities, and will remember thy Sins no more;* *Isa. 43. 25.*

Now he is faithful that hath promised; *For God is not a Man that he should lye, nor the Son of Man that he should repent.* Hath he said it, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? Yes surely, for the God of Truth cannot falsify or fail of his Word, especially having seal'd it with an Oath; *that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lye, we may have the stronger Assurance and Consolation;* *Heb. 6. 17, 18.* So that if we confess our Sins, the Faithfulness and Justice of God will oblige him to forgive us: upon which therefore we may safely depend. Of this see more, Vol. I. p. 93.

Finally, To say we have no Sin is to *make God a Lyar, and his Word is not in us.* For God hath concluded all under Sin, and they that think or say they have not sinned, are the greatest of Sinners, as falsifying with God and Men.

Thus we see the Sense of the Epistle for this Day; which shews the clear Evidence we have of the Christian Religion,

gion, from the Testimony of Christ and his Apostles, and the Miracles done by both. As also the End of Writing the Truths reveal'd by it; to wit, that we may have Fellowship with the Father and the Son; together with the Message deliver'd by them, that God is all Light and Purity, without any Mixture of Darkness or Impurity; and that we are all Sinners, full of Darkness and Error, having no way but Confession and Repentance, to be deliver'd from them. All which are great and weighty Truths, worthy of our most serious Thoughts and Meditations, which we shall do well to bestow upon them.



DISCOURSE XIV.

The GOSPEL for St. John's Day.

St. John xxi. 19, to the end.

Jesus said unto Peter, Follow me. Then Peter turning about, seeth the Disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his Breast at Supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this Man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains Christ's Call to St. Peter, together with some Discourse that pass'd between our Saviour and him concerning St. John; both which will afford Matter worthy of our Notice and Consideration. And,

First, Of our Saviour's Call to St. Peter, in these Words, Jesus said unto Peter, follow me. This was the constant Form of Words used by our Saviour, in calling his Apostles and Disciples, Follow me: The import of which Phrase was, that they should sequester themselves from the Encumbrances of the World, and become Attendants upon him; to
hear

hear his Doctrine, and to be Eye-witnesses of the Miracles with which he confirm'd it: for the Apostles and Disciples were not only to learn of him themselves, but to teach and instruct others; the Church which Christ planted, was to be water'd and propagated by them; they were to turn Men from the Darkness of Paganism to the Light of the Gospel, and from the Power of Satan to the Knowledge of God. To fit them for these great and eminent Services, our Saviour singled them out to be his own Scholars and Companions, and taught them himself the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. He establish'd them in the Belief of his being the promised Messias, and furnish'd them with that Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit, that all the Power and Wisdom of the World could not withstand. And that they might the better attend this great Work, he bid them quit all other Employments, and follow him. Thus he call'd *Matthew* to give his Attendance upon him, who thereupon left his Publican's Stall to be a Preacher of Righteousness. The like Charge he gave to *Andrew, James, and John*, the Sons of *Zebedee*, whom finding by the Sea mending their Nets, he called them to quit their Nets and Trade of fishing, and to follow him; letting them know that he had other Work for them, and that instead of Fish they should henceforth catch Men: which they after did, by bringing in Sholes of Converts to the Christian Faith. So particularly did *St. Peter*, who was of the same Profession, and to whom Jesus said, *Follow me*; who thereupon immediately left all and follow'd him. And we still are call'd upon to be Christ's Followers, tho not so immediately to attend his Person as they did; yet to follow his Doctrine deliver'd by him, and to tread in the Steps of his Example, which he hath chalk'd out for us: for he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that can alone lead us to Life Everlasting.

This then was the usual Form and Method of Christ's making and gathering Disciples, by which he call'd them from the Cares and Encumbrances of this Life, to attend weightier Matters, and to become his Servants and Followers.

And as *Peter* was following Christ, turning about, he saw the Disciple whom Jesus loved, likewise following. This was *John*, who was peculiarly dear to his Lord and Master, and was treated by him with more Freedom and Familiarity than the rest, as appears by the honourable Place that Christ gave

gave him above all others; for *he leaned on his Breast at Supper*. It was (as we are told) the Custom of those Times, to lie along at Meals upon Couches, where the second lay with his Head in the Bosom of him that was before him: This was the Place assign'd to our Apostle, who lay in our Saviour's Bosom at the Paschal Supper, and was admitted to his Secrets, and to know more of his Mind than the other Disciples. When our Saviour told his Apostles that they were not all true to him, but one of them would prove a Traitor, *Peter*, who had deny'd him, would not venture to ask who it was, but put *St. John* upon it, whose dearness and familiarity with him might give him greater Boldness, to propound the Question to him; saying, *Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?* To which, tho no Reply be mention'd here, yet in Chap. 13. 23. *Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a Sop, when I have dipped it; and when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the Son of Simon: after which, Satan enter'd into him, and he quickly deliver'd him up.* Where we may observe, that our Saviour would not reveal the Treachery of *Judas* to them all, to make it the more publick: which may teach us rather to conceal than publish the Faults of one another; for *Charity will cover a multitude of Sins*. Yet notwithstanding he thought fit to reveal it unto *John*, tho not directly, yet by Signs and Tokens; to let us know that we may and ought to discover the Miscarriages of others to fit Persons and at fit Seasons, when it may tend most to the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. But to go on:

Christ having told *Peter* what was to be his Fate, or by what manner of Death he should die, Ver. 18, 19. *Verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdedst thy self, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy Hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee where thou wouldst not:* meaning, that in his old Age he should be led forth like a Captive, and carried bound to the Place of Execution; signifying thereby, by what Death he should glorify God: which by stretching forth his Hands, and being carried bound where he would not, shew'd it to be by Crucifixion; by which he afterward confess'd and glorify'd Christ.

Now *Peter* being told something of his own Death, seeing *John*, said unto *Jesus*, *And what shall this Man do?* that is, what shall this Man's Fate be? or how shall he die? To which our Saviour gave a smart Reply, checking his Curiosity,

riosity, and saying unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.* If I mean to continue his Life longer than others, what does that concern thee? follow thou me. Our Lord had told them, that there were some among them that should live to see his Coming in Judgment upon *Jerusalem*; which is the meaning of that Saying of his, *Matth. 16. 28. Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here that shall not taste of Death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.* And of these *St. John* was suppos'd to be one, for he liv'd to see the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and many Years after it. Now *St. Peter* prying too far into this Affair of *St. John*, met with this smart Rebuke, "What if I will that he live to my coming at that time, what Concern is that of thine? or what matter is that to thee? Do thou keep close to thy Duty in following me; which as thou hast hitherto done in the Discipleship, so must thou shortly in Sufferings too, and therefore mind and prepare for them."

But the Disciples misunderstood that saying of our Lord, *What if I will that he tarry till I come?* Taking that for his final coming to Judgment at the last Day, which was meant only of his coming in Judgment upon the *Jews*, and the final overthrow of *Jerusalem*, so often mention'd in the New Testament. And from that mistake there went a saying among the Brethren, that that Disciple should not die. Which Report went so generally current among them, that as they took *John the Baptist* for his Fore-runner at his first Coming in the Flesh, so they thought *John the Evangelist* was to be his Fore-runner at his coming in the last Day to Judgment; that he should live to that time, and then not die, but be translated into Heaven. Hence we find one *Ephrem*, Patriarch of *Antioch*, affirming, that there were three from the Beginning of the World to the End of it, that should undergo this Translation; *Enoch* before the giving of the Law; *Elias* under the Law; and *St. John* under the Gospel. But *St. John* himself, in relating this Passage, confutes this mistake, saying here, *That Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* that is, "If *John* be one of those that shall live to see my executing Vengeance upon my Crucifiers, what Concern is that of thine? thy Business is to dispose thyself to obey and suffer for me, and to follow me to the Cross; which will better become thee, than such a vain and needless Curiosity." So that our Saviour's words were

were not meant of *John's* not seeing Death, but that his Life should be prolong'd beyond the rest ; and indeed so it was, for he liv'd and preach'd the Gospel above thirty Years after Christ's Ascension into Heaven, and died above a hundred Years old in the time of the Emperor *Trajan*. This is the sum of the Discourse that pass'd between our Saviour and St. *Peter* concerning *John* ; of whom 'tis said, in the

Next Verse, *This is the Disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his Testimony is true* : meaning, that St. *John* was the Author of that Gospel that goes under his name, and that he was both the Witness and the Writer of the things related in it, for he preach'd it in the Churches of *Asia*, and at the request of the *Asian* Bishops wrote and publish'd it. And the Christians of *Asia*, especially those of the Church of *Ephesus*, where he resided, were so confirm'd in the Belief of it by the Doctrine and Miracles contain'd in it, that they were well assur'd of the Truth of his Testimony, and could set their Seal to all that was deliver'd by him. But beside that Gospel,

He wrote also three Epistles ; the first Catholick to all Christians ; the second to an Elect Lady and her Children ; the third to the beloved *Gains*, whom he lov'd in the Lord. All which breathe out nothing but unfeign'd Love to God and our Neighbour. Moreover,

During his Exile and Confinement in the Isle of *Patmos*, he wrote likewise the abstruse Book of the *Revelation*, containing many dark Mysteries, Visions, and Prophecies of some future Events relating to Christ's Church and Kingdom.

These Books have been by the general Consent and Tradition of the Christian Church own'd for the Writings of St. *John*, and have been all receiv'd for Canonical : which Apostle spake more expressly of the sublime Mysteries of Religion, such as the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Life everlasting, than all or any of the other Evangelists. And therefore as St. *Matthew* is represented in the shape of a Man, for beginning with the Birth and human Nature of Christ ; St. *Mark* of a Lion, for beginning with the Voice of one crying in the Wilderness ; and St. *Luke* of an Ox, for beginning with *Zacharias* the Priest's offering Sacrifice : so St. *John* is set forth in the shape of a flying Eagle, for beginning with the Divine Nature of Christ, soaring above the

the rest in these Sacred Mysteries, and supplying the Defects of the other three. And as he spake, so did he write more of the Acts and Miracles of our Saviour, than any of them.

And yet he adds in the close of this Gospel, *There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the World it self could not contain the Books that should be written.* A hyperbolical Expression, signifying the great multitude of wise Sayings, and the immense number of wonderful Works that were utter'd and done by him; which if they were all put into writing, they would swell into so many Volumes, as even to fill the World with the Noise and Number of them.

To St. John's Writings we must add something of his Sufferings for the Name of Christ: He met with great Cruelty and hard Usage from the Emperor *Domitian* for his adhering to, and propagating the Christian Faith. Among other barbarous Treatment, he was by the Proconsul of *Asia* cast into a Cauldron of boiling Oil, or Oil set on fire; but it pleas'd God to save and deliver him out of it, as he did the three Children out of the fiery Furnace, and *Daniel* out of the Lions Den. But the cruel Emperor finding he could not dispatch him that way, order'd him to be banish'd into the Isle of *Patmos*, where he remain'd for some years, preaching the Gospel to the Inhabitants of that Island, till after the death of *Domitian*, when he return'd again to *Ephesus*; where finding *Timothy* their Bishop crown'd with Martyrdom, he took upon him the Government of that Church, till the time of *Trajan*, in whose Reign he died in a good old Age. This is a brief Account of the Gospel for this Day, and the Saint concern'd in it; both which will instruct us in many good Lessons. As,

From Christ's calling upon St. Peter and the other Disciples to leave all and follow him, we may learn the great Lesson of Self-denial, and to follow him in the rough as well as the smother ways of our Duty. This is the first Lesson to be learnt in Christ's School; *If any will be my Disciple (saith he) let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.* 'Tis the first step we advance in Christianity; and he that boggles at this, stumbles at the Threshold, and deserts his Saviour at the first setting out. And too many such there are, who instead of leaving all for Christ,

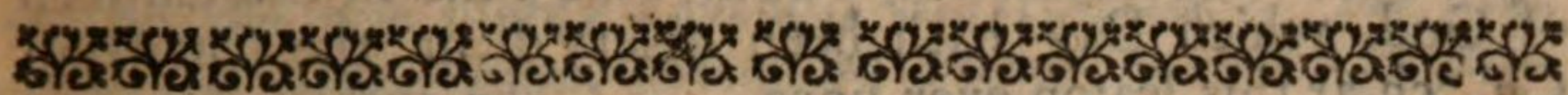
Christ, will leave Christ for every Trifle, and prefer the gratifying of a Lust, before the Love of their Saviour. But these are not so much the Followers, as the Forsakers of Christ, and must never hope to receive any Benefit by him. Wherefore to approve our selves to be his Disciples, let us be willing to accompany him in his Sufferings, as well as to partake of his Glories; and to follow him to the Cross, if we mean to follow him to a Crown.

2dly, From Christ's checking St. Peter's Curiosity about the time and manner of St. John's Death, we may learn to avoid all idle and curious Questions about Matters which concern not us to know: This was St. Paul's Advice to Timothy, to *avoid all profane and vain Babblings, and Oppositions of Science falsely so call'd*; 1 Tim. 6. 20. And in the second Epistle, Chap. 2. 16. he repeats the same Counsel, *Shun all profane and vain Babblings, for they will increase to more Ungodliness*. Instead of informing the Mind, they only corrupt the Manners, and eat out the Substance of all Religion. And therefore, ver. 23. he wills him to *avoid all foolish and unlearned Questions, knowing they do but gender Strife*, and beget nothing but Factions and Quarrels. And therefore having so good Reason and Authority for it, we may well enough say to all such busy and inquisitive Persons, that pry into things that belong not to them, as our Saviour did to St. Peter, *What is that to thee?*

3dly, This Discourse may rectify the Mistake about St. John's Death; for from that Saying of our Saviour's, *What if I will that he tarry till I come*, there was a common Fame spread abroad, which obtain'd among the Antients, that he died not at all, but was translated. Others from that Report believ'd, that he only lay asleep in the Grave, and that he alone of all the Apostles was to live till Christ's second coming to Judgment. All which was without any foundation, for St. John himself (as was before observ'd) in recording that matter, declar'd the Sense of our Saviour to be otherwise; and the History of his Death in the days of Trajan, hath abundantly confuted that Mistake.

Lastly, St. John's firm adhering to the Faith to the last gasp, may teach us Constancy and Perseverance in it to the end. No Menaces or Persecutions could shake his Belief, or scare him from publishing of the Gospel. Trials and Tribulations rather whetted than abated his Courage, and he was more animated than discourag'd by any earthly Opposition. Which should teach us to *hold fast the Profession*

session of our Faith without wavering; knowing that if we confess Christ here, he will confess us before his Father who is in Heaven.



DISCOURSE XV.

The EPISTLE for the *Innocents Day.*

Rev. xiv. 1 — 5.

I look'd, and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty four thousand, having his Father's Name written on their Foreheads. And I heard a Voice from Heaven, as the Voice of many Waters, &c.

THE High Festival of *Christmas* is attended with a numerous Train of Saints and Martyrs for its greater Solemnity; of some of which the Church has thought fit to preserve the Memory: as *St. Stephen*, *St. John*, and the holy *Innocents*; who following Christ to their Death, may fitly be remember'd at the Celebration of his Birth: None (as a Father hath observ'd) being more proper Attendants on Christ's Nativity, than the blessed Martyrs, who have laid down their Lives for him, from whose Birth they receiv'd a spiritual Life. And of these, the same Father hath observ'd three sorts.

The first sort is, of those that were Martyrs *both in Will and Deed*. Of this kind was *St. Stephen*, and many other of the Apostles, who not only in Will, but in Deed laid down their Lives for Christ.

The second sort, is of those that were Martyrs *in Will*, but not *in Deed*. Of this kind was *St. John*, who yielded himself to Death, when cast into the boiling Cauldron, and so was a Martyr in Will; but being by the good Providence of God preserv'd and deliver'd out of it, he was not so in Deed.

The third sort, is of those that were Martyrs *in Deed*, but not *in Will*. And this was the Case of those innocent Children that were slain by *Herod*, and so suffer'd *in Deed*;

but being Infants incapable of Knowledg and Choice, could not be so *in Will*. And yet these have been ever reckon'd among the Martyrs, because they suffer'd for Christ; and a Day was appointed by the holy Fathers (as *Origen* tells us) to celebrate their Memory from that time in the Church of God, which Day hath been observ'd in the Christian Church at this season ever since.

The Collect for the Day minds us, how God out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings hath ordain'd Strength, and made Infants to glorify him by their Deaths. These words were taken out of the eighth Psalm, where the Psalmist blesses God, who by the means of little Children promotes his own Glory, and by the Innocence of their Lives and Deaths perfecteth Praise; as our Saviour elsewhere does, saying, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast reveal'd them unto Babes; even so Father, for so it seem'd good in thy sight.* Mat. 11. 25, 26. Thence teaching us to pray, that God would *mortify and kill all Vices in us, and so strengthen us with his Grace, that by the Innocency of our Lives and the Constancy of our Faith, even unto Death, we may glorify his holy Name, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The Epistle for the Day contains a Vision of St. John's, wherein, as in a Landskip, was represented to him something of the Glories of Heaven, and the Felicities of a future State: of which, because suffering Infants may be Partakers, as well as adult Persons, they are appointed to be read on the Day of their Remembrance.

The Vision hath in it many abstruse and obscure Passages, which being hard to be understood, I shall not presume to determine any thing positively about them; but only give you the best light into them that I can, from the Conjectures of Learned Men.

It begins thus: *I look'd, and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion.* Now this Lamb is suppos'd to be that Lamb of God, that was usher'd in by St. John, to take away the Sins of the World; even the Son of God, our Blessed Saviour, John 1. 29, 36.

This Lamb is said to be slain before the Foundation of the World, Rev. 13. 8. meaning, that God in his eternal Decree and Determination had appointed him as a Sacrifice to be offer'd up for the Sins of Mankind. Of this, Abraham foretold, saying unto Isaac, *My Son, God will provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-Offering,* Gen. 22. 8. which Lamb
was,

was, according to the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God, by wicked hands taken and slain, Acts 2. 23. For these Sufferings, by which this Lamb of God took away the Sins of the World, and accomplish'd the Work of Man's Salvation, he was highly advanc'd and rewarded. *He stood upon the Mount Zion, having all Power in the Christian Church, which is often express'd in Scripture by Zion and Jerusalem.* In other places he is said to sit upon the Throne at the Right Hand of God, with an hundred forty and four thousand round about him, having the Father's Name written on their Foreheads. By these are meant that numerous Train of Saints and Angels, that surround the Throne of God, singing Praises to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore. Of these we read more in the fifth Chapter of the Revelation, ver. 11, 12. where St. John tells us, *He beheld, and heard the Voice of many Angels round about the Throne, the number whereof was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud Voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power, and Wisdom, and Glory, and Blessing.* Among these may be suppos'd to be those glorify'd Infants, that were murder'd and martyr'd for the sake of Christ.

The Greek Church, in their Calendar, reckon them to the number of fourteen thousand; to which may be added, other elect People of God, who being baptiz'd in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are said to have the Father's Name written or sign'd in their Foreheads.

Moreover, in this Vision, wherein he seems like St. Paul to be wrapt up into the third Heaven, he heard a Voice from Heaven, as the Voice of many Waters, and as the Voice of a great Thunder. By which may be meant the Shouts and Acclamations of glorify'd Saints, and just Men made perfect, which resembled the murmuring Sound of flowing Streams and falling Waters, the Noise whereof seem'd sometimes to break forth like a Clap of Thunder. Furthermore, *I heard (saith he) the Voice of Harpers harping with their Harps:* which may be understood of that heavenly Musick made by the blessed Consort of those celestial Inhabitants; singing as it were a new Song before the Throne, and before the four Beasts and Elders: meaning, the glorious Hallelujah sung to the Lamb or Son of God, for taking away the Sins of the World. This is the new Song so often refer'd to by David, saying, *Sing unto the Lord a new Song, for he hath done marvellous things.* 'Tis that triumphant

triumphant *Epinicion*, or Song of Victory, sounded forth by the Heavenly Host for the Redemption of Mankind, who were *redeemed not with such corruptible things as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.* And this was a Song, that no Man could learn, but the hundred forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the Earth. For as none but they were concern'd in it, so none else could bear a part in that Celestial Choir. The Wicked and the Ungodly are not fitted to extol or glorify God; they are only the faithful and elect People of God, that are qualify'd to sing forth his Praises.

After this, there follows a Description of the blessed Inhabitants of the Heavenly Regions; who are here describ'd,

1st, By their Purity: *These are they which were not defil'd with Women, for they are Virgins.* This may be truly affirm'd of the innocent Children we commemorate this day, who being sent out of the World almost as soon as they came into it, escap'd all the Defilements of the Flesh, and were pure from the Pollutions of the World; they were taken away in their Virgin State, and died without the Impurity of sinful Lusts; and so were (as St. Paul wish'd in the behalf of the *Corinthians*) *presented as chaste Virgins unto Christ*, 2 Cor. 11. 2. The like may be affirm'd of all truly regenerated Christians, whose Souls being wash'd in the Blood of that immaculate Lamb that was slain to purge away the Sins of the World, are presented pure and without spot before God by Jesus Christ; and so become Inhabitants of these undefiled Mansions: who are describ'd, as by their Purity, so,

2dly, By their Piety, manifested by a holy Imitation of their Saviour, express'd in these words; *These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*: meaning, that they follow the Direction of Christ's Doctrine, and the Guidance of his Example. His faithful Servants will be Followers of him as dear Children, and tread in the steps that he hath chalk'd out for them. They will follow the Example of his Patience, Humility, and Condescension for the Good of Mankind, and think it their Glory as well as their Duty, to imitate and come as near him as they can. The Expression here of following the Lamb *whithersoever he goeth*, implies the following of him, as well in the rough and miry Ways of Persecution and Adversity, as in the

the smother Paths of Pleasure and Prosperity: and so indeed we must, following him in Self-denial, and taking up the Cross, if we mean to follow him to Heaven, and there receive from him a Crown.

3dly, These Heavenly Inhabitants are farther describ'd by their great Privileges and Advantages above others; for they are said to be *redeemed from among Men, being the First-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb*: that is, they were rescu'd from the Sins and Punishments of that wicked Age, having a part in the first Resurrection, and over them the second Death hath no power; *Rev. 20. 5.*

Lastly, They are describ'd by the Innocency and Integrity of their Lives; for *in their mouth was found no Guile, for they were without fault before the Throne of God*. Such were those innocent Babes, whose Murder and Martyrdom we remember this day. There was no Falshood or Hypocrisy in their Hearts or Tongues, who having committed no actual Sin, were without fault and blameless before God. And such are all penitent and sincere Christians, whose Sins being done away by his Mercy, appear innocent and righteous in God's sight.

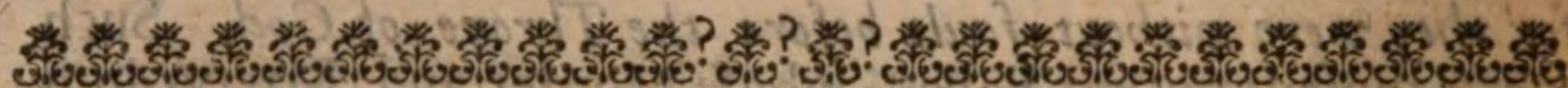
Thus I have given the best Light I can into the dark and obscure Passages of this Day's Epistle: in which we have,

(1.) A Glimpse or imperfect Representation of the future Joys and Glories of Heaven; which are enough to quicken our Appetite and Desires after them, tho' not to satisfy our Curiosity about them. *It doth not yet appear (saith St. John) what we shall be*; for Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive what great things God hath laid up for them that love and fear him: only we know that we shall be *like him, for we shall see him as he is*. We shall live for ever in his presence, and be ravish'd with the uncessant Praises and Hallelujahs sung to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore: which things we are rather to admire and prepare for, than to pry too much into such unsearchable and unreveal'd Mysteries.

(2.) We learn from this Discourse, the Qualifications of the Persons that will be receiv'd into those unspeakable Joys. And they are such as are pure in Heart, and keep themselves unspotted from the World; for Heaven is the Mansion of Peace and Purity, where no Discord or De-

fillement enters. They that are admitted there, are describ'd in the Vision to be such as *were not defil'd with Women*, nor corrupted by strange Flesh, but have kept their Vessels in Sanctification and Honour, and not in the Lusts of Uncleanness.

Again, They are such as are true Followers of Christ, and *follow the Lamb wherever he goes*; not declining the Ways of Vertue for any Difficulties they meet with in them, but being faithful unto Death, and resisting even unto Blood, striving against Sin, By thus passing through the World with Innocence and Patience, we shall arrive at last to the undefiled Regions of Bliss and Glory.



DISCOURSE XVI.

The GOSPEL for the *Innocents* Day.

St. Matthew ii. 13—19.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a Dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child, and his Mother, and flee into Egypt; and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy him. When he arose, and took the young Child and his Mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the Death of Herod, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day acquaints us with the Manner of our Saviour's Preservation from the ambitious Rage and Cruelty of *Herod*; who fearing the shaking of his Throne by the Birth of a new-born King, sought to slay him in his Infancy, to secure himself in the Kingdom. How he escap'd this intended Murder, is the Design of the ensuing Words to declare.

They begin thus; *The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a Dream.* The Appearances of Angels in Dreams and Visions, to deliver Messages, were frequent in those times upon some great and weighty Occasions. Thus Jo-
seph

Joseph was warned of God, by an *Angel's* appearing to him in a *Dream*, to take unto him *Mary* his Wife, *Mat.* 1. 20. An *Angel* likewise appear'd to the *Virgin Mary*, to let her know, that *she should conceive and bring forth a Son, and call his Name Jesus*; *Luke* 1. 28, 29. The *Wise-men* that came from the East to see and worship the new-born King of the *Jews*, were warned by God in a *Dream* to return into their own Country another way, *Mat.* 2. 12. After whose Departure, the *Angel of the Lord* appeared again to *Joseph* in a *Dream*, saying unto him, *Arise, and take the young Child and his Mother, and flee into Egypt, and tarry there till the Death of Herod*. The reason whereof is added, because *Herod* alarm'd with the Inquiry of the *Wise-men* from the East, saying, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* and jealous of the Loss of his Kingdom by the Birth of a Rival King, design'd to destroy him to prevent the Danger: which thing he first attempted to do by Craft and Subtilty, seeking an opportunity to dispatch him under a pretence of worshipping him; of which, see more in the Gospel for the *Epiphany*. But being disappointed of that Design, he labours to do that by Violence and open Force, which he could not compass by secret Policy: to which end, he order'd all the Children that were in *Bethlehem*, and in all the Coasts thereof, to be put to death, from two Years old and under; hoping among the rest to be rid of this new-born King. And to make sure work of it, he spared not his own Son from the Massacre; which made *Augustus*, upon hearing of it, say, *Melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium*; 'twas better to be *Herod's* Swine than Son: for being a *Jew*, he prohibited the killing of Swine, but made no scruple of destroying his Son. An Account of this Cruelty of *Herod* to his own and the *Bethlemite* Children, we have from *Macrobius*, with sharp Reflections on this bloody Tragedy, *Lib. Saturn.* 1.

But how was the Son of God, our Saviour, preserv'd from this intended Slaughter? Why, this was done by God Almighty's ordering *Joseph*, by the ministration of an *Angel*, to secure the holy Child *Jesus* and his Mother by a speedy flight into *Egypt*; which he immediately did, departing in the night, to lose no time, and to prevent discovery: where he remain'd, according to Order, till the Death of *Herod*.

And here some have observ'd the Difficulty of this Journey, how he was not commanded into a neighbouring Village,

lage, or to his own Country *Galilee*, but remov'd into a far Country, above two hundred miles distant from home or any of his Friends, through a vast Defart in a cold Season, with a Child not above six Weeks old, unto a strange People of another Language, uncertain how long he should stay, and what Entertainment he should meet with. Which Command of God to *Joseph* was like that to *Abraham*, Gen. 12. 1. *Get thee out of thy Country, and from thy Kindred, and from thy Father's House, unto a Land which I shall shew thee: And I will bless thee, and in thy Seed shall the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* Now neither was *Abraham* nor *Joseph* disobedient to the heavenly Vision, but both without any disputing readily obey'd the Command of their Maker; for *Abraham* presently departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him, ver. 4. which the Apostle ascribes to the Strength of his Faith, Heb. 11. 8. *By Faith Abraham, when he was call'd to go out into a Land which he should after receive for an Inheritance, obey'd; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

By the same Trust and Confidence in God, *Joseph*, upon the Message of the Angel, arose, and took the young Child and his Mother, and departed where he was directed, viz. into Egypt, and was there until the Death of Herod.

What Hardships he met with in his Journey, and what Usage he found there, the Scripture being silent, it will be too curious for us to inquire. At his Arrival there, he is suppos'd to reside in or near the City call'd *Heliopolis*; where the holy Child Jesus being carry'd into the Temple, the Statues and Idols were said to fall down at his presence, like *Dagon* at the Approach of the Ark: wherein was fulfill'd that Prophecy of *Isaiah*, Chap. 19. 1. *Behold! the Lord shall come into Egypt, and the Idols of Egypt shall be moved at his Presence.* The Abode or Residence of those holy Persons in Egypt, bless'd that heathenish and idolatrous Country with many signal Blessings, of which the Prophet in that Chapter gives some particular Account. In the beginning, he tells them what Confusions should happen among them by reason of their Idolatries, that *the Heart of Egypt should melt in the midst of it*; that their Courage should fail, and their Counsels be infatuated by falling out and fighting with one another. All which would make way for, and end in their Deliverance; for God would send them a Saviour, a Great one, and he should deliver them; ver. 20. *Then should Egypt speak the Language of Canaan,*
and

and swear to the Lord of Hosts; ver. 18. In that day there shall be an Altar to the Lord in the midst of the Land of Egypt, and Sacrifices and Oblations offer'd thereon; ver. 19. And the Lord shall be known in Egypt, and a Blessing shall be in the midst of the Land. And for a close they are told, That the Lord of Hosts shall bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my People, and Israel mine Inheritance. These things foretold by the Prophet, were after fulfill'd by this Son of God: of which, 'tis suppos'd, they had the News brought and confirm'd to them by these holy Persons.

But how or when did they return out of *Egypt*? Why, the Angel that warn'd them to go and tarry in *Egypt* till the Death of *Herod*, did likewise bring them word of *Herod's* Death, and order'd them to return, as we read in the 19th, 20th, and 21st Verses of this Chapter; where we are told, that *when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appear'd to Joseph in a Dream in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and his Mother, and go into the Land of Israel, for they are dead who sought the young Child's Life. And he arose, and took the young Child and his Mother, and came into the Land of Israel. And this was done, as the Gospel for this Day tells us, that it might be fulfill'd which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I call'd my Son.* Which words are quoted out of *Hosea*, Chap. 11. 1. *When Israel was a Child, then I loved him, and call'd my Son out of Egypt.* Which Saying was literally spoken of *Israel*, but mystically of *Christ*; both which were beloved of him, and call'd by him out of *Egypt*. For as *Pharaoh* commanded all the Male Children of the *Hebrews* to be slain as soon as they were born, thinking thereby to destroy God's first-born *Israel*; so *Herod* appointed all the young Children of the *Bethlemites* to be murder'd in their Infancy, hoping thereby to destroy the new-born King of *Israel*. But God in his good Providence preserv'd both, and thereby disappointed the bloody Designs of each: for as God by the Death of *Pharaoh* deliver'd *Israel* with a high hand out of *Egypt*, so did he by the Death of *Herod* call his Son out of the same place.

Now the Cruelty of *Herod* towards these tender Infants, with the occasion of it, is set forth in the following words; *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise-men, was exceeding wroth: that is, when he fail'd of his Expectation of seeing them in their way home, by their returning another way, and thereby lost the opportunity of exe-*

executing his wicked Purpose, he was fill'd with Rage, and presently sent forth and slew all the Children that were in Bethlehem from two Years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the Wise-men: meaning the time of Christ's Birth, or computing his Age as he learnt from the *Magi* or Wise-men that came to worship him, which he calculated to be under two Years old, and therefore immediately gave order for the Slaughter of all the Children in *Bethlehem* of that Age, thinking thereby to include this new-born King in the bloody Execution, and so to be rid of the Fears of any Competitor. A Cruelty surpassing all Belief, had not *Herod* been the Actor, famous for killing his own Children, and murdering all that stood in his way. By which we see to what height of Cruelty, Ambition edg'd on with Rage and Jealousy may lead Men; and how little Regard or Remorse it hath, for shedding the most innocent Blood.

But how did the *Bethlemites*, both Men and Women, take this inhuman Slaughter of their little Children? Why, no doubt, with great Grief and Lamentation: yea, the Cry and Lamentation, especially of the poor Mothers, so suddenly bereft of their dear Children, was so great, that, as we are here told, *then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the Prophet, saying, In Rama was a Voice heard, Lamentation, and Weeping, and great Mourning; Rachel weeping for her Children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.* *Rama* was a chief Town belonging to the Tribe of *Benjamin*, which was of *Rachel's* Family; and her weeping for her Children, was for their being carry'd away from her into Captivity, and so were not with her; of which we read, *Jer. 31. 15.* And this was a Tyne of the Murder of these innocent Children in *Bethlehem*, in or near which *Rachel* was bury'd.

But what became of *Herod* after this inhuman Butchery? Why, History tells us, that he died a miserable and untimely Death, smitten with sundry Plagues and Tortures both in Body and Mind; God avenging his Cruelty to those poor Innocents, by turning it upon himself, his inward Parts scorch'd with a burning Fever, his outward Parts afflicted with Boils and Ulcers, together with great Convulsions and Torments in both; as *Josephus* relates more at large, *Lib. 17. cap. 8.*

This was the wretched End of this merciless Tyrant, who was eaten up with Worms, leaving a Brand of Infamy upon

upon his Name, and Trouble to his Posterity. Whereas

These holy Innocents have been ever since remember'd with Honour, and rewarded with a Crown of Martyrdom.

Thus we see the Drift of this Gospel, and the Design of this Festival; from both which, we may learn many useful Lessons: As,

1st, From *Herod's* Cruelty in destroying those holy Babes, we learn, that Innocence is not always a sufficient Protection from the Rage and Fury of bloody Men; for these harmless Infants had never committed any actual Sin, nor harbour'd any evil Design against any: and if Innocence could have saved them, they had escap'd the doleful Massacre; but this rather expos'd than protected them from the Fury of the Tyrant.

2^{dly}, We may learn from hence, that Sufferings are not always Arguments of Guilt in those that undergo them; for we see here, that innocent Children may be made a Sacrifice to the Ambition of wicked Men: and therefore such Sufferings are rather Tokens of God's Favour, than Marks of his Displeasure; for these Infants were honour'd and crown'd for their Sufferings, and many a Man hath ow'd his Happiness to his Afflictions. Which may teach us,

3^{dly}, That whatever Afflictions or Oppression Innocence may meet with from the hands of Men, it will be sure to be rewarded by the hand of God. He who makes all things work together for good to his dear Children, hath plac'd the Cross in the way to a Crown, and order'd that by many Tribulations we are to arrive to and enter into the Kingdom of God.

4^{thly}, From *Herod's* pretending to worship our Saviour to have an opportunity to destroy him, we may learn, that Religion is too often used as an Instrument to serve Mens ambitious and worldly Designs; which should warn good Men not to be too easily impos'd upon by such Pretences.

5^{thly}, From God's warning of *Joseph* to arise, and take his young Son and his Mother, and flee into *Egypt*, to escape the Fury of *Herod*, we learn the watchful Care of Divine Providence for the Security and Preservation of his People. God is a strong Tower of Defence to them that put their trust in him, and his Providence is a sure Refuge to flee to in times of Trouble. And *who shall harm you* (saith the Apostle) *if ye are Followers of that which is good?* Moreover,

6^{thly},

6thly, From God's rewarding these holy Innocents, and lifting them in the Number and Blessedness of Martyrs, we may learn to part with our dearest Children, and nearest Pledges of our selves, at God's Call, and in his Cause. We may not murmur or repine, but readily resign them up, when they may become Instruments of God's Glory, and thereby promote their own Happiness: *Suffer little Children to come unto me (saith Christ) and forbid them not, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They can be no Losers by God's taking them from us, when he takes them to himself; and therefore we should rather mind the Goodness of God, than mourn or murmur at such Dispensations; saying with holy *Job*, upon the loss of all his Children, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

Lastly, Let us learn from hence to *become as little Children*, in the Frame and Temper of our Minds; without which, our Saviour tells us, *we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 18. 3. Let us imitate them in their Innocency by a harmless and inoffensive Conversation; for they neither think nor do any evil.

Let us learn of them Humility and Lowliness of Mind; for they are neither lifted up with their own, nor envy at any others Condition. Again,

Let us imitate them in their Submission to the Will of God and intire Dependence upon him; for as they have no Will of their own, but are wholly guided by the Will of God both in doing and suffering, so let us upon all occasions say, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done.*

Finally, Let us imitate them in their Contempt of the World; for as no ambitious or worldly Designs enter into the Minds of Children, so 'twere well if ours were as free from them. In short, as they glorify'd God by their Deaths, so let us do by our Lives.





DISCOURSE XVII.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday after
Christmas-Day.

Gal. iv. 1 — 7.

Now I say, that the Heir, as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, tho he be Lord of all: But is under Tutors and Governours, until the Time appointed of the Father. Even so we, when we were Children, were in Bondage under the Elements of the World: But when the Fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a Woman, &c.

THE great Feast of our Saviour's Nativity, hath not only some Days to go before and prepare for it, but likewise some to follow after it, to attend and adorn that great Solemnity. Accordingly, this Day being the first Sunday after *Christmas*, hath the same Collect to celebrate the Mercy, and to continue the Memory of it.

The Epistle and Gospel likewise treat of the same Subject; the Birth of Christ: the one shewing us the Time, the other the Manner of it.

As for the Time, the beginning of the Epistle for this Day tells us, that the Church was for some time in its Infancy or Childhood; during which time it was in Bondage under the Elements of the World, till in the Fulness of Time it was set free by the Birth of a Saviour.

Now I say (saith the Apostle) Ver. 1, 2. that the Heir as long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Servant, tho he be Lord of all: but is under Tutors and Governours, till the Time appointed of the Father. Even so the Church, during its Minority, tho Heir of all the Promises, and Lord of all the Blessings contain'd in them, was yet as a Servant under the Power and Pupilage of the Law, and to be train'd
up

up under the beggarly Rites and Rudiments of it ; till he, who was the Substance of all those Types and Shadows, should come, to set it in a higher Form, by the more spiritual and manly Institutions of the Gospel. And

When that Fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law. Where by the *Fulness of Time*, we are to understand that happy Period, when the Date of all the Promises and Prophecies of the Messiah was expir'd and run out : for if we look back even to the first Foundation of the World, we shall find very early Notices given of this Divine Person, which in the successive Ages of the World, were renew'd and improv'd into clearer Revelations of him.

He was promis'd to *Adam* in Paradise, immediately after the Fall, *Gen. 3. 15.*

And some hundreds of Years after, to *Abraham*, *Gen. 12. 3.*

After that to *Moses*, *Deut. 18. 15.* then to *Jacob*, *Gen. 49. 10.*

In farther Process of Time, the Prophets gave fuller and plainer Revelations of him, the Light of Prophecy shining more and more unto the perfect Day of his actual Appearance.

The Prophet *Isaiah* declar'd the Person, of whom he should be born ; *Isa. 7. 14.*

The Prophet *Micah* foretold the Place of his Nativity, *Mic. 5. 2.*

The Prophet *Daniel* fix'd the Time and Period of his Coming, *Dan. 9. 24.*

The Prophet *Haggai*, at the Building of the second Temple, declar'd, that the *Desire of all Nations should come, and fill that House with his Glory* ; *Hag. 2. 7.* And the Prophet *Malachi*, the last of the Prophets ; that *the Lord whom they sought, should suddenly come to his Temple* ; *Mal. 3. 1.*

Now, when the Date of all these Predictions was run out, and the Measure of Time appointed for his Coming was filled up ; then was the Fulness of Time, which happen'd to fall in exactly with the Time of his Appearance, the happy Season we now commemorate.

For at this Fulness of Time, the Apostle here tells us, *God sent forth his Son.* He was, at that time, earnestly expected both by *Jews and Gentiles* ; the Question in every one's Mouth then was, *Where is he that should be born ? And is this he that should come ?* They were at it at every turn, which shews, they were all in a general Expectation of

of him, tho they differ'd about the Way and Manner of his Coming.

The *Jews*, who look'd for a glorious and splendid Messiah, were gazing upward, to see in what quarter of the Heavens this *Sun of Righteousness* would arise, and how they might be ready to receive him with Shouts and Acclamations of Joy.

Others, who had better studied and understood the Prophets, were looking about to see in what Part of the Earth this *Branch of the Root of Jesse* would spring up. But while the World was thus intent, and upon the Rack of Expectation, the Angel *Gabriel* was sent from Heaven to the Virgin *Mary*, to let her know, that she was to be the Mother of this great Person; and that how strange and incredible soever the News might seem to her, yet he who sent her this Message was abundantly able, and would in due time certainly bring it to pass; which she in a little time after, to the great Joy and Wonder of the World, found punctually accomplish'd: for shortly after we read *she brought forth her first-born Son*, who was the first and only-begotten Son of God, *Luke 2. 7.* And this is what is here affirm'd by the Apostle, that *in the Fulness of Time God sent forth his Son.* And likewise verifies what follows,

That he was *made of a Woman*: he who made the World, and all things in it, was pleas'd to condescend so low, as to be made of a Woman; and tho he was begotten of the Father before all Time, yet in the Fulness of Time he admitted another, and far inferiour Generation, *viz.* to be born as we are.

The first Promise of him stil'd him, *The Seed of a Woman*, *Gen. 3. 15.* The next, *The Seed of Abraham*, *Gen. 12. 3.* And after that, the Offspring of a *Virgin*, *Isa. 9. 7.* All which Prophecies were fulfill'd in his being conceiv'd and born of the Virgin *Mary*; which made her say in her *Magnificat*, that *the Lord had regarded the low Estate of his Hand-maiden*; and that *in delivering Man he did not abhor the Virgin's Womb*; *Luke 2. 47.* There it was that the *Word was made Flesh*, being conceived of her very Substance: and there our Human Nature, by an ineffable Union, was conjoin'd with the Divine in the same Person.

This is a Mystery fraught with nothing but Miracles and Wonder, that the Divine and Human Nature should be so united, as neither to swallow up or pollute each other; that the Son of God should not take upon him the Nature
of

of Angels, or come in the Form of a Seraphim, but should appear in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, and come in the Form of a Servant; that he who was before all Time, should vouchsafe to be born, and to make his Way into the World thro a Virgin's Womb; that Eternity should begin to be, and the only-begotten Son of God become the Offspring of a Woman; and she one who was a Mother, that knew no Man, that had a Son without any Father upon Earth, and a Child that was free from the Taint and Contagion of all Mankind. In a word, here is an Infant, born in an Inn, wrap'd in Swadling-Clothes, and laid in a Manger; and yet ador'd by Kings, worshipped by Angels, believ'd on in the World, and receiv'd up into Glory. These, and many more than can be express'd, are the astonishing Wonders and Miracles of the Incarnation; which are not to be comprehended at present, but are reserv'd for the Object of our eternal Praises and Admiration.

Next to his being *made of a Woman*, 'tis here affirm'd, that he *was made under the Law*; whereby he not only took our Nature, but our Debt upon him; and this was necessary too in order to our Salvation: for if he had only taken our Nature, and not our Debt to Divine Justice, he could never have been our Surety, nor satisfy'd the Law for us. The Law could not have taken hold of him, being not under it; for *whatsoever the Law speaks, it speaks to them that are under the Law*: And therefore as he was made of a Woman to take our Nature, so was he made under the Law to take our Obligation upon him; otherwise, tho he might be made like us, yet we could never be made like him: but by doing both, he is become our all-sufficient Surety and Saviour.

But how, or when was the Son of God thus made under the Law? Why, this was done partly at his Nativity; at which time being descended from the Stock of the *Jews*, he became liable by Birth to the Law under which he was born. Hence the Apostle tells us, that *being found in Fashion as a Man, he became obedient to the Law of Death*; the one being a necessary Consequent of the other, *Phil. 2. 8.*

But this was chiefly done at his Circumcision, when by taking in his Flesh that Sign and Seal of the Covenant made with *Abraham*, he became a Debtor to fulfil the whole Law: So St. Paul testifies, *Gal. 5. 3. I Paul testify unto you, that every Man that is circumcised, is thereby a Debtor*

to do the whole Law. This Debt that lay upon us, Christ as our Pledge or Surety undertook to satisfy, and by his active and passive Obedience paid to the utmost Farthing.

And this will lead me to consider the Ends for which the Son of God was thus made of a Woman, and made under the Law. And they (as the next words declare) were *to redeem them that were under the Law, and that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.* Redemption and Adoption are the two great Privileges obtain'd for us by Christ's Satisfaction: by the one, we are rescu'd from the Bondage of the Law; by the other, we are restor'd to the Liberty of Sons: both which being high and invaluable Privileges, will deserve to be consider'd.

And, 1st, one great End and Privilege of Christ's being made under the Law, is, *to redeem them that were under the Law.* Redemption evermore supposes a Sale or Alienation going before it: and to redeem, signifies the buying or bringing back of something that was before made away or alien'd. Thus when any thing that was sold or made away as a Pledge or a Pawn, is regain'd or brought back again, 'tis said to be redeem'd; and this relates to Persons as well as Things. Thus when any Person that was sold or carry'd away Captive is retaken or ransom'd, he is likewise said to be redeem'd; but still a former Sale or Alienation must be suppos'd to go before. And this represents to us the natural and forlorn Estate of Mankind, who were all *sold under Sin*; our Natures were alien'd from God in *Adam*, and the first Transgression brought us under the heavy Doom and Sentence of the Law, which we could neither satisfy nor remove; for *as many as are under the Law are under the Curse, as it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them*: Gal. 3. 10.

In this deplorable Case the Son of God was pleas'd to interpose and undertake for our Redemption, by laying down a Price and valuable Consideration for it: and because neither Silver or Gold, nor any corruptible thing had Worth enough to redeem the Soul, he made his Soul an Offering for Sin, and shed his own Blood to save ours. Because *the Soul that sinneth must die*, and the same Nature that had offended was to make Satisfaction, he therefore took our Nature that he might pay our Debt, and as our Surety

put himself under the Law, to release and quit us from the Punishment of it: by this means *he hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us*; and by reconciling us unto God, *hath blotted out the Hand-writing that was against us*. So that now we may appeal from the Rigour and Sentence of the Law, to the Grace and Favour of the Gospel: for how loudly soever the Law may thunder out Terror and a Curse, it speaks only to them that are under the Law; whereas we being redeem'd from it, are now no longer *under the Law, but under Grace*. Neither hath he redeemed us only from the Curse of the Moral Law, but from the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law; which St. Peter says, *was too heavy for the Necks of our Fore-fathers to bear*, Acts 15. 10. By his being circumcised he became obedient to that Law likewise, and thereby freed us from the painful Rite of Circumcision, and other costly and cumbersome Sacrifices enjoin'd by it; and by both, hath wrought out perfect Redemption for us, the first End of his being made under the Law.

The Second is, *that we might receive the Adoption of Sons*; that is, that we who were *Gentiles*, and so Strangers and Enemies unto God, might be made Sons, and taken into the Adoption of Children. The time was, when the *Jews* were the only People of God; for *to them appertain'd the Adoption, the Glory, the giving of the Law, and the Promises*, Rom. 9. 4, 5. They were the only Darlings of the Divine Care and Providence, whilst the *Gentiles*, like so many Out-casts, were excluded by a Partition-Wall from the Service and the Privileges of the Temple. The Apostle stiles these *Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise*; Ephes. 2. 12, 13. But our Blessed Saviour, by being made of a Woman, and made under the Law, hath broken this Enclosure, and made us all one in Christ Jesus; insomuch, that we *Gentiles* who were *afar off and Enemies by evil Works*, are now brought nigh by the *Blood of his Cross*; and from Aliens and Out-casts, become the adopted Sons and Children of God.

And because ye are Sons (saith the Apostle in the next words) *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father*: that is, to confirm you in the Truth of his Sonship; God the Father hath communicated to us the Spirit of his Son, and thereby enabled us to call God Father, and to address to him as *his Father and our Father, as his God and our God*; John 20. 17. We
may

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may now come to him with the Boldness and Confidence of Children, seeing he bears to us the Bowels of a Father, and those too infinitely more tender and compassionate than those of any earthly Parent. Hence we are told, that the Spirit here given us, is not a *Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but a Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Wherefore (as the Apostle goes on) *thou art no more a Servant, but a Son.* We are no longer to look upon our selves as Persons in a servile Condition, under a severe and tyrannical Master, and so doing all things as Slaves merely for fear of the Rod and the Lash; but to reckon our selves in the Condition of Sons, under a loving and indulgent Father, and so doing all things from a Principle of Love, and paying him a free, honourable, and ingenuous Service, taking delight in our Work, being well assured of ample and honourable Wages. For

If a Son, then an Heir of God through Christ. The Son you know is always Heir to his Father, a Natural Son by Birth-right; and so Christ is said to be *Heir of all things*, an adopted Son by Favour and Courtesy: and so we are made *Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ*, Rom. 8. 17. And that not to a perishing Estate or a fading Kingdom, but to an *Inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us*: to which we are born of incorruptible Seed, and begotten again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4, 23. And tho no other Heir would hear of adopting Strangers into his Family, and much less of dividing the Inheritance with them; yet Christ, the Heir of all things, is pleas'd to admit us as *Joint-Heirs* with himself, and to *make us meet Partakers with him, of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* The sum of all then is this: The Son of God was made of a Woman, that he might be like us; and was made under the Law, that we might be like him: that is, he became the Son of Man, that we might be made the Sons of God; and partook of our Human Nature, to make us partakers of the Divine. This is the Drift or Scope of this Day's Epistle: From whence we may learn,

First, To magnify and adore the infinite Love and Condescension of our Saviour to Mankind, that the Maker of all Things should, for our sake, vouchsafe to be made himself, and that not only of a Woman, but under the Law too; that he who gave Laws to the World, should

subject himself to a Law of his own making, and undergo the utmost Rigour and Severity of it, merely to deliver us from the Curse and Punishment of it: This is a Mercy never enough to be acknowledg'd or admir'd, and may justly make us say with holy *David*, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits?* Such wonderful Condescension should fill our Hearts with Thankfulness, and our Mouths with the Praises of our Maker. And since all that we can say or do must fall infinitely short of this unparallel'd Love, we should cry out with the Psalmist; *Lord, what is Man that thou art so mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou so regardest him?*

Secondly, Christ redeeming us from the Sentence and Severity of the Moral as well as the burdensom Yoke of the Ceremonial Law, should teach us the more hearty and chearful Obedience to him; for hereby he hath verified his own saying, that *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden is light*. He hath taken off all the Rigour and Hardship of it, and put such a Sweetness and Comfort into it, that renders his Yoke rather an ease than a clog, and his Burden not only light, but delightfom: So the Psalmist assures us, *Great Peace have all they that keep thy Law, and nothing shall offend them*. And elsewhere, *In keeping thy Commandments there is great Reward*. Yea, the Son of God hath not only freed us from the Curse of the Law, but intitled us to all the Blessings contain'd and promised in it; by which means he hath brought over the Law to our side, and that which before writ bitter things against us, now speaks nothing but Peace and Comfort to us. Which should teach us to delight in God's Law, and to run with chearfulness the Paths of his Commandments.

Lastly, Christ's receiving us into the Adoption of Sons, may teach us all filial Love and Duty to him, and to behave our selves as becometh the Sons and Children of God; acting suitably to so great a Privilege, and doing nothing unworthy of so high a Relation. As God beareth towards us the Bowels of a Father, so let us bear towards him the Duty of Children: *A Son honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master*. And we find God Almighty justly claiming the Duty of both; *If I am a Father, where is my Honour; if a Master, where is my Fear?* saith the Lord of Hosts, Mal. i. 6. Moreover, Children you know are to obey their Parents, to hearken to their Counsels, to receive their Reproofs and Admonitions, and to submit to their Correc-

Corrections; how much more ought we to do all this to our Father in Heaven? *We have had Fathers of the Flesh* (saith the Apostle) *and they corrected us, and we did them Reverence; shall we not rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? for they, verily, for a few Days chasten'd us for their own Pleasure, but he for our Profit, that we may be partakers of his Holiness.* Heb. 12. 9, 10. Once more, Children are wont to trust and rely upon their Parents, and to cast themselves upon their Care and Provision for them; this we should much more do on our heavenly Father, who knoweth we have need of these things. In a word, we must endeavour to please him in all things, and to avoid whatever may offend him, so shall we receive the Inheritance of Sons, and hear that happy Sentence, *Come ye blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, &c.*



DISCOURSE XVIII.

The G O S P E L for the Sunday after *Christmas* Day.

St. Matthew i. 18, to the end.

Now the Birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise; Whenas his Mother Mary was espous'd to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her Husband, being a just Man, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day shew'd us the Time and End of Christ's Birth, which was in the Fulness of Time, and for the Redemption of Mankind. The Gospel shews us the Manner and Circumstances of his Birth, which were strange and miraculous, as the Sequel of this Discourse will discover. It begins with the Narration of it; saying, *The Birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:* which being extraordinary and beside the common Course of Generation, deserves to be related and remember'd too to all Posterities for evermore. The relation of it begins thus; *Whenas his Mother Mary was espous'd to Joseph, before they*

came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. Where we may observe,

First, That his Mother *Mary* was one of a low and mean Condition; which made her say, that *God* regarded the low Estate of his Hand-maiden. And *Joseph* to whom she was espous'd, was no better; for he was a mean and manual Artificer, by Occupation a Carpenter: which was purposely contriv'd to avoid all shew of Greatness, and that the whole Transaction might be carried on in the greatest Humility.

Secondly, We may observe, that *Mary's* Espousal to *Joseph* was only a Promise or Contract; which, according to the antient laudable Custom, had some space of Time before the Consummation of the Marriage. So we read, *Deut. 20. 7.* that a Man may betroth himself to a Wife, and not presently take her. And so it was here, *Mary* had been betroth'd to *Joseph*, which was the Espousal, but was not yet married to him; which was the Consummation or the Compleating of it.

Thirdly, We may observe, that in this space of Time between the Espousals and the Marriage, which is express'd here, by *before they came together*, *Joseph* discern'd her to be with Child, but knew not by whom it was; tho it was found after to be in a miraculous manner, by the Operation of the Holy Ghost.

But for the better understanding of this great Affair, we may note, that between the Espousals and the Marriage, or before they came together to compleat it, the Angel *Gabriel* appear'd to the Virgin *Mary*, and saluted her in a strange unusual manner; saying, *Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, and blessed art thou among Women.* But she being surpriz'd, and casting in her Mind what manner of Salutation this should be, the Angel said unto her, that she had found Favour with God above all other Women, and that she should be the Mother of the Son of God: for behold, saith the Angel, *Thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, which shall be call'd the Son of the Highest; and the Lord shall give unto him the Throne of his Father David, and he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end; Luke 1. 28, &c.* But when *Mary* objected to the Angel, asking how these things could be, she being a Virgin, and not knowing a Man; the Angel reply'd to her, that this should be done by the Holy Ghost, and by the Power of the most High

High overshadowing her; and for that reason the Child that should be born of her, should not be the Son of Man, but of God. And to confirm her Belief herein, the Angel farther told her, that her Cousin *Elizabeth*, tho past the Age of Child-bearing, was now big with a Son, and that *this was the sixth Month with her, who was call'd barren; adding, that with God nothing shall be impossible.* To which *Mary* submitted with all Humility and Thankfulness, saying to the Angel, *Behold thine Handmaid, be it unto me according to thy Word.* Hereupon *Mary*, to keep her self from all carnal Compliances with *Joseph*, and to wait the Issue of this Message, took a long Journey to visit her Cousin *Elizabeth*. At her coming, she presently found the Truth of what the Angel had told her, that her Cousin *Elizabeth* was six months gone of a supernatural Conception, and the Virgin finding her self at that time conceiving, saluted and congratulated her Cousin; upon which Salutation, *Elizabeth* overjoy'd, felt the Babe leaping in her Womb for Joy, to shew the Communication that was to be between *John* and Christ, and to pay at his Lord's Approach his Homage and Adoration to him: at which time, 'tis probable, that *Elizabeth* and her Child were both fill'd with the Holy Ghost, by the Influence and Inspiration whereof it was that she paid so profound a Reverence to the Holy Virgin, calling her the Mother of God, and saying, *Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* And then repeating the Angel's Benediction, *Blessed art thou among Women:* adding farther, and *Blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb:* and once more, *Blessed is she that believ'd, for there shall be a Performance unto her of those things, which were told her from the Lord;* being the first of all Generations, that call'd her *Blessed*. From this time these two holy Mothers accompanied together with their two holy Babes, daily blessing and praising God, with the holy Priest *Zacharias*, for the high Honours and Favours vouchsaf'd unto them. Here the blessed Virgin abode for the space of three months, sequestred far from *Joseph* her espous'd Husband, that there might be no carnal or conjugal Commerce pass between them.

At the end of the three Months, *Elizabeth's* time of Delivery drew near, and the Virgin's being with child began to appear; which made her think of returning home to her own House, trusting that *Joseph* being a good Man, and see-

ing the Circumstances of her Condition, would keep at a sufficient distance from her.

But what happen'd to her at her Return? why, a very great Cross sprung out of the cause of her Joy: for returning home discernibly with child, *Joseph* who knew nothing how it came to pass, the Secret of the Incarnation being yet conceal'd from him, began, not without just Cause, to be highly offended at it; her straying so far and so long from home, giving no small occasion of increasing his Jealousy. And here we may guess a little, what great Thoughts of Heart, what Strugglings of various and different Passions were found in the Breasts of these two pious Persons. On the one hand,

The Blessed Virgin, we may be sure, was not a little troubled to lie under the Shame and Reproach of Unchastity; and the more because tho she was arm'd with a Conscience of her own Innocence and Integrity, yet she had no way to manifest, or make it appear. Should she speak of the heavenly Visit and Intercourse with an Angel, it might be thought a slender Veil and Excuse for the suppos'd Crime: had she said any thing of the intervening or overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, it might be taken rather for a Dream, than any just Defence of her Chastity. And what seem'd a Wonder, and hardly to be believ'd by her self, would seem much more incredible to others. Beside, her great Modesty and Humility would not suffer her to declare God's secret and intimate Transactions with her; nor did she know how to reveal a thing, that tended so much to her own Praise and Honour. Moreover, the Trouble she observ'd in her offended Husband, added much to her Grief and Torment.

Under these Difficulties she had nothing to do, but to refer her self and her Cause to the Justice and Goodness of God, who she doubted not would in his good time make known her Innocence. In the mean time, she resolv'd patiently and chearfully to bear whatever Trials the Celestial Graces and Favours vouchsaf'd to her, might draw after them; hoping the Son she then bare, would in due time vindicate her Honour. On the other hand,

Joseph, we may well think, was under no small Concern for the Unchastity of his Spouse, which he thought beyond Suspicion, being too visible to be either excus'd or denied. The great Affection he bore to her Person, and the high Esteem he had of her former Piety, would not suffer him too rashly

rashly to expose her to Ignominy and Shame ; but being a good Man, and acting nothing out of Humour or Passion, would not presently bring her to condign Punishment, which by the Law was to be ston'd to death, as we read, *Deut. 22. 21, 24.* And therefore he cast in his mind how he might be rid of her in such a way, as might least redound to his dishonour, or her disgrace ; so the words of the Gospel tell us, *Then Joseph her Husband, being a just Man, and not willing to make her a publick Example, was minded to put her away privily :* that is, he being a merciful Man, and kind Husband, would not bring upon her the publick Shame and Penalty of a violated Chastity, but sought to dismiss her privately, either by concealing the Espousals, which were usually done secretly in the Father's House, or by giving her a Bill of Divorce upon some other Pretence.

But while he was meditating on these things, to the great trouble and affliction of both Parties, *Behold, the Angel of the Lord appear'd to Joseph in a Dream, saying, Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy Wife ; for that which is conceiv'd in her, is of the Holy Ghost.* When the Matter was ready to break forth, and Joseph was just about to execute what he had resolv'd upon, behold an Angel steps in with a Message from God, that deliver'd both from their Sorrows and Fears ; to shew that Patience under Sufferings will find in due time a seasonable Deliverance. Joseph was here warn'd of God *in a Dream*, which was one of the Ways of God's delivering his Mind to People, as we read, *Numb. 12. 6.* The Angel that deliver'd it, saluted Joseph, tho a mean Person by the Title of *the Son of David*, to intimate to him his Relation to the Messias, who was to be of *David's Race.* The Message he reveal'd to him, was, that *Mary's Conception* was not by any Knowledge of Man, but by the powerful Operation or Overshadowing of the Holy Ghost ; and therefore he should entertain no Fear or Jealousy of her Unchastity, but receive her as a spotless and vertuous Wife. To which Divine Message, Joseph gave an undisputing Faith and ready Obedience.

But the Angel told him not only of her miraculous Conception, but likewise of the wonderful Birth of the Son of God and the Saviour of the World, who was shortly to be born of her ; for *she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his People from their Sins :* signifying his Birth to be extraordinary, without the Concurrence of Man, and beside the common Course of Gene-

Generation. That his Name should be great and wonderful, for he should be call'd *Jesus*, that is, a Saviour, a Name above every Name, to which every Knee should bow ; partly, in reverence to his Greatness, and partly in acknowledgment of his Goodness, and the Salvation purchas'd and receiv'd by him : for so the Reason annex'd declares, *He shall save his People from their Sins* ; meaning, that he shall save us from the Power and Dominion of Sin, that it shall not reign in our mortal Bodies ; from the Filth and Pollution of Sin, that it shall not defile our Persons or Performances ; and chiefly from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin, that it shall not destroy our Souls. This was such good news, as made holy *Joseph* to acquiesce and rejoice in it, and may teach us to do the same.

But what was the End of the Angel's revealing all this ? Why that the next words of the Gospel will tell us : *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold ! a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his Name Emmanuel ; which being interpreted, is, God with us.* By which it appears, that this was done not only for the private satisfaction of *Joseph* in this perplex'd Affair ; but for the satisfaction of the whole World, in a matter that concern'd all Mankind, to confirm their Faith in him, in whom the Prophecies of the Messiah were so plainly fulfill'd. The Prophet that foretold this, was *Isaiah*, Chap. 9. 7. where tho the Name *Emmanuel* in the Prophecy seems somewhat different from the Name *Jesus* in the Accomplishment, yet are they in effect the same ; the one signifying his Incarnation, in which he became God with us ; the other the Salvation procur'd by it, in which he became a *Jesus*, to save his People from their Sins, and so to perfect the Design for which he was born.

But what effect had this Revelation upon the Mind of *Joseph*, to whom it was made ? Why, that follows in the next words ; *Then Joseph being raised from Sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his Wife.* And here we may easily imagine, how overjoy'd they both were at this divine Declaration of her Innocence, and their prudent Management of the whole matter. *Joseph*, who went to bed full of Heaviness and Grief, awak'd next morning after the Vision, fill'd with Transports and Extasies of Joy, that he of all the Progeny of *David* should be

be Husband to the Mother of the long-expected Messiah, and chosen for a Guardian to her and her holy Child.

Mary, who was full of Fears and Troubles for the seemingly just Jealousy of her Husband, now rejoic'd with exceeding great Joy at this heavenly Vindication of her Honour. And from that time they cohabited together with a most entire Affection and an inviolable Chastity; for the Close of the Chapter tells us, *That he knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born Son, and called his Name Jesus.*

Some indeed from the Expression, that *Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son*, have infer'd that he might and did know her after; and the styling him the first-born, supposes that there might be a second. But he that considers the Scripture-Dialect, will find but little force in such Inferences; for when God said to *Jacob*, *I will not leave thee until I have done that which I spake unto thee*, it follows not, that when that was done, God left him after. 'Tis said of *Michol* the Daughter of *Saul*, *that she had no Child unto the day of her Death*; but will it follow thence, that she had one after? So likewise if the Precept of the sanctifying the First-born should always suppose a second, then none could be sanctify'd till that came, and many would not be sanctify'd at all; which is absurd and impious to imagine.

But tho it was sufficient to the Mystery of the Incarnation, that *Mary* was a Virgin at the Conception and Birth of our Saviour, and nothing that could follow after, could cast any Reflection or Dishonour upon the First-fruit of her Womb; yet the Church in all Ages have believ'd, that she continu'd ever after in a state of Virginity, being persuaded hereunto by that great Honour and Reverence she ever paid to her Son, by the special Regard she had to the Holy Ghost that came upon her, and the Power of the most High that overshadow'd her; as also by the singular Goodness and Piety of *Joseph*, who look'd upon her Body as the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Tabernacle of the Son of God, and therefore would not put it to the common Use of carnal and conjugal Embraces: for which reasons she hath been acknowledg'd the Ever-Virgin, and the Ever-blessed Virgin *Mary*.

Thus we see the wonderful Manner and strange Circumstances of this high Birth, as 'tis related by the Evangelists
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in the Gospel, and is the great Blessing we commemorate at this season. From which we may learn,

1st, The immaculate Conception and Birth of this Son of God, who tho he took Flesh and Blood like other Children, and was made in the Similitude of our Nature, yet was he perfectly free from all the Pollutions of sinful Flesh, and had not the least Taint and Contagion that adheres to it; he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens: and so was able to take away our Sins, having none of his own.

2^{dly}, We may learn to admire and adore the infinite Goodness and Wisdom of God in this Contrivance of Man's Salvation; his Goodness in providing and sending such a Saviour to us, his Wisdom in bringing it about in such a way, as no human Wit or Policy could ever invent or accomplish.

3^{dly}, This Discourse may teach us the high Honour and Esteem that is due to the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, for being the Mother of God, and the Parent of our Saviour. I know some have carry'd this matter too high, even to Adoration, worshipping her as a Goddess, as the Queen of Angels, and the Empress of Heaven; paying her more Devotions, and making higher Court to her, than either to the Father or the Son. Some have ascrib'd all those enamouring Praises and Expressions in the *Canticles* concerning the Church or Spouse of God, wholly unto her; as, *Thou art all fair, my Love, there is no spot in thee; a Garden inclos'd is my Spouse; a Spring shut up, a Fountain sealed: Behold, how fair art thou, my Love, my Dove, my Undefiled, fair as the Moon, and clear as the Sun.* Cant. 4. 1, 7, 12, &c. And Bonaventure, in his Lady's Psalter, hath throughout the Book of Psalms put in *Lady* instead of *Lord*; and so ascrib'd all that to the Blessed Virgin, that is due to God only. But as these have exceeded, so others have come short in this matter, by with-holding the Honour due to her exceeding high Privilege; not vouchsafing to call her Blessed, but looking upon her as an ordinary or common Woman. Let us then take the middle way between these Extremes, giving her the Honour that the Angel did, in stiling her Blessed above all other Women, God having favour'd and dignify'd her above any of her Sex, and fulfilling her own Prediction, that all Generations should call her Blessed.

4^{thly}, From the Angel's ordering his Name to be call'd *Jesus*, we may learn the Honour that is due to that high
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and sacred Name. The Apostle calls it *a Name above every Name*: 'twas given from Heaven, and brings Salvation with it here on Earth; yea, *there is no other Name given under Heaven by which we can be sav'd, but the Name of the Lord Jesus*. And therefore the Apostle hath commanded, that *to the Name of Jesus all things in Heaven and Earth, and under the Earth, should bow and obey*.

5thly, From Christ's being born of a pure Virgin, let us learn all Purity and Holiness of Life. This whole Transaction of Christ's coming into the World had nothing but Purity in it; his Conception was immaculate, his Birth without blemish and without spot, he was every way undefiled and separate from Sinners; his Precepts were pure, and his whole Life the most perfect Pattern of Purity and Holiness: and all this to teach us to *cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*. 'Tis only *the pure in Heart and Body that shall see God*; and if we have any hopes of seeing or being saved by him, we must *purify our selves, even as he is pure*. To which end, let us (as we are now commanded) address our selves to that purifying Ordinance of the holy Communion, where we feed on the immaculate Body and Blood of our Saviour; the one being broken, the other shed for us, that our sinful Bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our Souls wash'd through his most precious Blood; and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us: which God grant, &c.



D I S.



DISCOURSE XIX.

The EPISTLE for the Circumcision of *Christ*.

Romans iv. 8—14.

Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin: Cometh this Blessedness then upon the Circumcision only, or upon the Uncircumcision also? For we say, that Faith was reckon'd to Abraham for Righteousness, &c.

WE have celebrated the Birth and Nativity of our Blessed Saviour, and consider'd the Time, Manner, and other Circumstances relating to it. The next thing that was done to him, was the Circumcising him the eighth Day, according to the Law given to *Abraham*; which we are to remember at this time, for the great Mercies and Benefits that accrue to us thereby.

The Collect for the Day minds us of God's making his Blessed Son to be circumcis'd and obedient to the Law for Man; and from thence teaches to pray for the true Circumcision of the Spirit, that our Hearts and all our Members being mortify'd from all worldly and carnal Lusts, we may in all things obey his Blessed Will. For the better understanding these things, we must note,

1st, That Circumcision was the cutting off the Flesh of the Fore-skin, in token of mortifying the Lusts of the Flesh, which is most apt to rebel against the Spirit. This was expressly requir'd by God to be done to all Male Children on the eighth Day after their Birth, *Lev. 12. 3.* This Command was first given to *Abraham*, as a Sign or Seal of that Covenant which God made with him and his Posterity, that all Nations should be bless'd, redeem'd and sav'd thro his Seed that was to come; that is, the Messiah our Lord Christ. This Circumcision was likewise a Rite of Initiation into the Church then, as Baptism is to us now; it enroll'd them into God's House and Family, and made them Heirs to the Covenant

nant of Promise. This Rite the Blessed Virgin and her pious Husband carefully perform'd to this Holy Child at the prescrib'd time, with all its Solemnities.

Now this Ceremony or Sacrament of Circumcision, tho of God's own Institution, related only to Sin and Sinners; and so this spotless Son of God, by reason of the Purity of his Nature and Birth, could have no need of it for himself: yet having taken upon him our Sins, and undertaken the Expiation of them, he willingly submitted to it, to shew his Obedience to the Law, under which he was made, and to free us from the Obligation of it; giving Testimony thereby that he would not refuse the most painful and dolorous part of our Duty, of which the first Act was the shedding of some of his Blood in Circumcision; which was after compleated by shedding the rest at his Passion: upon which account he is here said to be *circumcis'd*, and made *obedient to the Law for Man*. Again, we must note,

2dly, That the Circumcision of the Spirit, here pray'd for, is the putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh, with the other spiritual Effects of Christ's Circumcision: This is call'd, *The Circumcision of the Heart*; that is, not outward in the Flesh, but inward in the Spirit; whose Praise is not of Men, but of God: Rom. 2. 28, 29. and elsewhere 'tis call'd, *The Circumcision made without Hands*, Col. 2. 11. and consists in cleansing the Heart from all the Impurities of fleshly Lusts; which is the spiritual Grace of the carnal Circumcision.

Now to this spiritual Circumcision it is, that the Promise made to *Abraham*, of blessing all Nations in his Seed, chiefly appertains. Accordingly therefore, the Epistle for this Day shews us,

First, What this Blessedness is.

Secondly, To whom it belongs. And,

Lastly, How we may attain unto it: All which are here laid down, and must be spoken to.

First, The Epistle begins with the Nature of that Blessedness that was promis'd to *Abraham* and his Seed in the Messiah, and wherein it consists. This is contain'd in the first words, *Blessed is the Man, unto whom the Lord will not impute Sin*; which words are in the Verses immediately foregoing, quoted from *David*, Psal. 32. where he thus describes the Blessedness of those that follow the Faith of *Abraham*, saying, *Blessed are they whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sins*
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are cover'd: By which it appears, that true Blessedness consists in the Pardon and Forgiveness of Sin; for 'tis Sin only that separates between God and us, and withholds good things from us; so that when that Makebate is remov'd by our Repentance, and his Remission of them, then does he take us again into his Favour, and bless us with all heavenly Blessings in Christ Jesus. So St. Peter told the Jews, that God sent his Son to bless them, by turning them from their Iniquities, that he might thereby turn from his Wrath, and the Punishment due to them.

But who were the Persons to whom the Promise of this Blessedness belongs? Was it confin'd to the Jews only, who receiv'd the Sign of Circumcision, or was it extended to the uncircumcis'd Gentiles also? Why that, the Apostle's Reasoning in the following words will declare; for in the next Verse he asks the Question, *Cometh this Blessedness then upon the Circumcision only?* that is, is it restrain'd only to the Jews that were circumcis'd? *or upon the Uncircumcision also?* that is, does it reach the Gentiles also that were not circumcis'd? Before he directly answers the Question, he hath recourse to the Manner of God's dealing with Abraham, in the next words; *For we say, that Faith was reckon'd to Abraham for Righteousness*: and then considers the Condition that Abraham was in, when his Faith was thus reckon'd to him, moving another Question, *How was it then reckon'd? when he was in Circumcision, or in Uncircumcision?* that is, was his Faith thus reckon'd to him before he was circumcis'd, or after? To which he gives this direct Answer, That it was *not in Circumcision, but in Uncircumcision*; meaning, that Abraham's Faith was thus accepted before he was circumcis'd: for so we read, Gen. 15. 6. *Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for Righteousness*; whereas his Circumcision was a long time after, as we read, Gen. 17. 24. *And Abraham was ninety Years old and nine, when he was circumcis'd in the Flesh of his Fore-skin*. By which the Apostle proves, that this Blessedness and Acceptance with God could not be a Privilege annex'd to Circumcision, and so confin'd to the Jews only; but is a Grace and Favour of God that appertains as well to the uncircumcis'd Gentile, as to the circumcis'd Jew; and gives us to understand, that believing and obeying of God now as Abraham did, will be accepted of God without Circumcision. But here it may be ask'd,

For what then serv'd Circumcision, if Men might be sav'd as well without as with it? Why, it serv'd as a Sign or Seal

Seal of the Covenant made with *Abraham* before the promis'd Seed came; during which time, the Church, like an Heir in his Minority, was under Tutors and Guardians, and to be train'd up under the Discipline and Pedagogy of the Law, until the time appointed of the Father. Now of this Covenant Circumcision was the Sign, which *Abraham* therefore receiv'd as such; and not only so, but, as the Apostle here tells us, he receiv'd it as a *Seal of the Righteousness of Faith*, which he had being yet uncircumcis'd, that he might be the Father of all who believe, whether circumcis'd or not: for so we are here told, *Abraham's* believing in God, and obeying of him whilst he was in a State of Uncircumcision, made him the Father of all uncircumcis'd Believers. And likewise his Continuance in the same Faith and Obedience, when he was in a State of Circumcision, made him the Father of all circumcis'd Believers, who walk in the Steps of that Faith of our Father which he had, being yet uncircumcis'd: which Faith will be imputed to both for Righteousness, as the Apostle farther proves in the next words; *For the Promise that he should be the Heir of the World was not to Abraham, or to his Seed, thro the Law, but thro the Righteousness of Faith*: that is, the great Promise made to *Abraham* and his Posterity of inheriting the Land of *Canaan*, which was a Type of Heaven, was not by the Works of the Law, of which Circumcision was the Beginning or Entrance, but by Faith in Christ, or believing in that promis'd Saviour, by whom alone these things could be effected.

For if they that are of the Law be Heirs (saith the Apostle) *then Faith is made void, and the Promise made of none effect.* If it were so, that the Inheritance was made over upon the Observation of the Mosaical Law, and belong'd to the *Jews* merely by their being circumcis'd, then all Faith in Christ would be utterly vain and void, and the Promises of Grace and Mercy by him could be of no effect: for all Blessedness would depend upon observing those external Rites, and there would be no need either of any inherent or imputed Righteousness.

The Drift and Design of this Discourse of the Apostle is to shew, that Justification and Acceptance with God is not to be obtain'd by the Works of the Law, but by Faith in Christ; *for by the Works of the Law* (saith he) *shall no Flesh living be justified.* The Ceremonial Law consisted of Sacrifices, and divers Washings and carnal Ordinances, which were only Types and Shadows of good things to come; but the Substance was Christ, in whom they were all fulfill'd, and at

whose Coming they all vanish'd like Darkness at the Approach of the Sun: so that that could make nothing perfect, and consequently avail nothing to Justification; nor can the Moral Law, which we daily break, do any thing towards it. This he strongly argues in this and other Epistles against the *Jews*, who depended much upon Circumcision, and other Works of the Law, boasting that they had *Abraham* for their Father, and that they were his Seed; thinking that enough to entitle them to the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Inheritance of the Sons of God. Of these the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 10. 3.* that *being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own, they have not submitted themselves to the Righteousness of God.* They counted upon a more generous kind of Happiness to be atchiev'd by the Merit of their own Works, and car'd not for such a borrow'd and beggarly Felicity, that came like an Alms from the Bounty of Heaven: but such proud Contractors with God, as scorn to receive Heaven *gratis*, shall find Hell for their Reward; and they that refuse eternal Life, as the Gift of God, shall receive eternal Death for their Wages.

Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, was justify'd by Faith in Christ: for *he saw my Day afar off* (saith Christ) *and rejoiced*; and *he believed in God*, who had promis'd Salvation by him, *and it was counted to him for Righteousness*: and so must all his Seed and Posterity too, if they hope for any Justification; and it will be in vain to pretend to have *Abraham* for our Father, unless we imitate his Faith, and tread in his Steps.

But to return to our Saviour's Circumcision, the Subject of this Day's Meditations, I shall briefly consider both the End and the Effects of it; and then apply all to the Circumcision of the Heart, which we are directed to pray for this Day.

For the End of Christ's Circumcision, that was not to cleanse or cut off any Impurity of his Flesh: for he was perfectly free from the Stain of all original or actual Pollution, his Conception and Nativity were both immaculate; for being deriv'd from the Holy Ghost, that Fountain of Purity, they were both without Blemish and without Spot: and so he needed no such Ceremony of Cleansing or Purification upon that account.

But the End of his Circumcision was like that of his Baptism, that he *might fulfil all Righteousness*; for being made obedient to the Law for Man, he was to keep and perform it to a tittle, as well the Ceremonial as the Moral Part of it, which

which he punctually did. He observ'd the Law of Circumcision, because it was commanded of all *Abraham's Seed*, from which he descended, and likewise that he might subject himself to the Curse and Penalty of the Law in our stead, to which his Circumcision made him liable; for that made him a Debtor to the whole Law, both as to the Duty, and the Punishment of it. Again,

He submitted to Circumcision to put an end to it; in which sense he is said to be *the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. 10. 4. He shed his Blood therein to save ours, and underwent that sore and painful Ceremony to free us from it. In a word, he was circumcised to put an end to the Law, and abolish those carnal Ordinances; and was baptiz'd to begin the Gospel, and to bring in more sublime and spiritual Precepts: by both which he hath not only *fulfill'd all Righteousness*, but likewise (as himself declar'd) made *his Yoke more easy, and his Burden light*.

And this will lead us to the blessed Effects and Benefits of his Circumcision, which are indeed many and great; for thereby he hath deliver'd his Church from the burdensome Yoke of Legal Rites and Ceremonies, and blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances, that was against us; and withal rescu'd us from the Rigour and Curse of the Mosaical Covenant. What a heavy Yoke of carnal Ordinances lay on the Neck of our Forefathers, we read *Acts 15. 10.* which *St. Peter* tells us was so great, that *neither they nor we were able to bear*. Their Altars daily smoked with costly Incense and Perfumes; their Temples flow'd with the Blood of their Sacrifices; their Washings were frequent, and their Oblations numerous and expensive, and few or no things were left indifferent to them.

Now Christ by his Circumcision hath freed us from this Yoke, *having abolish'd in his Flesh the Enmity, even the Law of Commandments contain'd in Ordinances, and making Peace for us*; Eph. 2. 15. By this he hath obtain'd for us Remission of Sins, by our believing in him; and likewise given us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to keep the Covenant of Grace, and inherit the Promises made in it.

The Sum of all is, that Christ the Son of God, to satisfy for us, clothed himself in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, and endur'd all the Shame, Misery and Punishment appertaining to it, save only the very Guilt it self, which the Purity of his Nature could not admit; and being without Sin, he suffer'd to the utmost what to Sinners was due, and perform'd to

the utmost what of Sinners could be requir'd, and hath thereby fully satisfy'd Divine Justice for our Sins, and obtain'd eternal Redemption for us. From whence I proceed, in the

Last place, to that spiritual Circumcision of the Heart, which we are taught to pray for this Day; and that consists in cutting off the Fore-skin of the Heart, that is, in mortifying of all carnal and worldly Lusts, and in all things obeying God's Blessed Will: 'Tis the casting all Filthiness, and all Superfluity of Naughtiness out of the Soul, and making it the Mansion of Purity and Holiness. And of this the carnal Circumcision of the Body is the Sign or Token, which without the former is of no avail; *for Circumcision verily profiteth (saith the Apostle) if thou be a Keeper of the Law: that is, if the Sanctity and Purity signify'd by it be duly observ'd and practis'd; otherwise, if thou art a Breaker of the Law, and this Purity be wanting, thy Circumcision is no better than Uncircumcision: for no spiritual Advantage can accrue to such by their being circumcis'd.* An uncircumcis'd Heathen, having not the Law, yet doing by Nature the things contain'd in the Law, shall fare much better than a circumcis'd Jew, with all his Boast of Privileges, if he be a Transgressor of the Law: *for he is not properly a Jew that is one outwardly, neither is that the true Circumcision, that is outward in the Flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Man, but of God; Rom. 2. 25. to the end.*

In a word, 'Tis the Purity of the Heart, and the cutting off all the Superfluities and Pollutions of fleshly Lusts, that is the true, inward and spiritual Circumcision; without which the outward Circumcision of the Flesh is of no Use or Benefit.

Thus we see the Nature, End and Use of this Ceremony: from which we learn,

1st, The Honour that Christ hath done to our Flesh, not only in partaking of it, but in not declining the Infirmities, Marks, and miserable Appurtenances of it: *As Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he likewise took part of the same.* And verily he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but he took on him the Seed of *Abraham*; Heb. 2. 14, 16. Hereby he hath dignify'd our Human Nature above the Angelical; and tho we were at first made a little lower, yet hereby we are made higher than the Angels. Neither is this Honour and Happiness confin'd only to the natural Seed of *Abraham*, but

to all the Followers of his Faith, who are said to have *Abraham* for their Father, while they tread in his Steps, and are taken for his spiritual Seed, being within the Covenant of Circumcision, tho they be not circumcis'd. And as *Abraham* rejoic'd to see this Day of Christ's Appearance, tho darkly in the Prophecy ; so if we are the genuine Seed of *Abraham*, we shall rejoice much more in the actual Accomplishment.

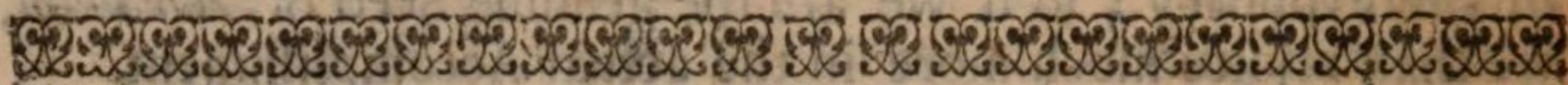
2dly, From this Discourse we may learn whence to look for our Justification, *viz.* not from the Works of the Law, by which no Man living can be justify'd, but by Faith in Christ, who is alone able to justify, and make us appear righteous before God. *Abraham believ'd in God, and that was counted to him for Righteousness*; and so must we too, if we look for any Acceptance with him: for 'tis not by any *Works of Righteousness which we have done*, which are all imperfect, and rather need Remission than require a Reward; but by his Mercy he saveth us, and 'tis Faith in him that alone intitles us to a share in that Salvation.

But yet this is not an idle, dead and ineffectual Faith, that indulges to Sloth and Carelessness; but a Faith that worketh by Love, and is accompany'd with Fruits of Righteousness, to the Praise and Glory of God. Wherefore,

3dly, Let us learn from hence not to depend upon any external Duties and Privileges, without the internal Grace signify'd and intended by them: for in *Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature*; Gal. 6. 15. We must be renew'd within, having our Hearts purify'd by Faith, and purg'd from an evil Conscience, before any outward Service perform'd to him can find any Acceptance: And what the Apostle said then of Circumcision, is as true now of Baptism, that it verily profiteth, if it wash away our Sins in that Laver of Regeneration; otherwise Baptism availeth nothing, and is no better than other common Washing. To conclude,

Lastly, Let us, as we are taught this Day, pray for the true Circumcision of the Heart, and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; that is, let us labour for that inward Purity of Heart and Mind, that is represented by both those Sacraments, and can alone give all Virtue and Efficacy to them, not resting in the outward Sign and Seal, but endeavouring for the inward Grace signify'd by them. Let us then, as *Moses* exhorted the *Israelites*, *circumcise the Fore-skin of our Heart, and be no more stiff-necked*, but obedient to the Will of God; Deut. 10. 16. Nor let us incur the Reproof of *St. Stephen*, who call'd

150 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the
the Jews uncircumcis'd in Heart and Ears, for their obstinate
opposing of Christ's Person and Doctrine; *Acts 7. 51.* In a
word, let us mortify all carnal and worldly Lusts, and then
the Lord will circumcise our Hearts, that we may love, fear
and obey him.



DISCOURSE XX.

The GOSPEL for the Circumcision of Christ.

St. Luke ii. 15—21.

And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the Shepherds said one to another, Let us now go down even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives an Account of the Time and Place of our Saviour's Circumcision, together with some remarkable Passages that went before and led to it. The Words in the Beginning, *And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away into Heaven*, refer to what went before in the preceding part of the Chapter; where we read of our Saviour's Birth, and the Ministry of the Angels in publishing and attending upon it. In the fourth and following Verses we read of the Place of his Birth, which was not at *Jerusalem*, or any great and populous City, where the News might have drawn many Visitors and Admirers; but at *Bethlehem*, a poor, desolate and unfrequented Village, where *Mary* was deliver'd in an Inn, without the Assistance of Midwife or Neighbours: And having brought forth her first-born Son, she wrap'd him in Swadling-Clothes, and laid him in a Manger, because there was no room for him in the Inn.

The Persons to whom the Intelligence hereof was first brought, were not any great Men, who were then at ease and a-sleep, being Midnight; but a few poor harmless Shepherds, who were then awake, and watching their Flocks in the Plains about *Bethlehem*; where *David*, the Father of our Lord, who was a Shepherd, had many a Night watch'd over his

his Sheep. Some indeed have thought something mysterious, and more than ordinary, in Christ's being first made known to the Shepherds; as if the yearning of this Lamb of God, *that taketh away the Sins of the World*, could not be more fitly related to any than to the Shepherds; nor could the Tidings of this great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, of this chief and good Shepherd, that laid down his Life for the Sheep, be better made known to any, than to the vigilant Shepherds, that were then watching their Flocks.

But however that be, these Shepherds, in the Night wherein our Saviour was born, saw a sudden and strange Light rising and shining round about them; which for its great and glaring Brightness fill'd them with Amazement and Terror. But while they were thus trembling and astonish'd, behold an Angel in great Glory, to do Honour to this new-born Prince, appear'd to the Shepherds, to tell them the joyful News of the Birth of a Saviour, who was Christ the Lord, *ver. 10, 11.* giving them this Sign to know him by; *You shall find the Babe wrap'd in Swadling-Clothes, and lying in a Manger*; a strange Sign, one would think, for so great a Prince: and yet not so improper for such a Saviour, who came to restore those by Humility, who fell by Pride, and to save the World by Suffering, which was undone by Sin. When the Angel had deliver'd this Message, there came down into the Air hovering over them, a great Company of the Heavenly Host, with great Joy celebrating the Birth of this Saviour, and singing his Nativity-Song in the sight and hearing of those ravish'd Shepherds, who were to relate it to others, that the World might hear and receive it from them.

The Hymn or Song that was sung by the Heavenly Quire of Angels upon this occasion, is related *ver. 14.* of this Chapter, *viz. Glory to God in the Highest*, who sent his Son to reconcile us to himself; *on Earth Peace*, upon the Birth of this Prince of Peace; *Good-will towards Men*, let Love and Kindness be henceforth shew'd to one another. By this Song and Adoration of the Angels was that Prophecy of David fulfill'd, *Psal. 97. 7.* *When he brought his First-born into the World, he said, And let all the Angels of God worship him*; which is mention'd as done by them to the Son of God, *Heb. 1. 6.* And the Apostle, in describing the Mystery of the Incarnation, tells us, that when *God was manifested in the Flesh*, he was *seen of Angels*, *1 Tim. 3. 16.* perhaps (as one hath observ'd) with relation to this solemn Visit and Doxology of the Angels at Christ's Nativity.

When the Angels had thus congratulated the Birth of our Saviour, and sung this Song in the hearing of the Shepherds to solemnize his Nativity, they all ascended up again into Heaven, from whence they came; where, as there is Joy over one Sinner that repenteth, *Luke 15. 7, 10.* so we may conceive a much greater Rejoicing, when Salvation came to the whole World.

And now we are come to the Gospel for this Day, which begins thus: *And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the Shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass; which the Lord hath made known unto us.*

Whilst the Angels were with these Shepherds, relating those glad Tidings, and singing and praising God for them, the Shepherds were so astonish'd and transported, that they scarce knew what they had heard and seen; but when they were gone, they began to recollect themselves, and said one to another, "Come let us go into *Bethlehem*, and there seek to satisfy our selves in the Truth of what hath been told us." Their Fear being remov'd, their Curiosity led them without delay to the Place; where, 'tis said, *They came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a Manger:* Strange Humility and Condescension, that those eminent Saints should have no better Lodging than a Stable, and the Son of God no better Cradle than a Manger! And yet this was the Sign given by the Angel to the Shepherds; *Ye shall find the Babe wrap'd in Swadling-Clothes*, not in a Crimson Mantle, and lying not in a Cradle of Ivory, but *in a Manger:* A strange Sign, one would think, of so great a Prince, and enough to discourage the Shepherds from going to see so mean a Sight; but yet not so improper for such a Saviour, who was to restore the World by Humility, that fell by Pride, and regain that by Suffering, which was lost by Sin. Accordingly the Shepherds coming to *Bethlehem*, found all things as the Angel had related to them: *And when they had seen it*, they were so big and full of the News, that they could not contain or confine it within their own Breasts, but publish'd it every where, *and made known abroad the Saying which was told them concerning this Child.* And all they that heard it, wonder'd at those things which were told them by the Shepherds. The Relation of those strange things from Persons that were Eye-witnesses of them, and wholly unsuspected of any Forgery, fill'd all that heard them with Wonder and Astonishment.

But

But Mary all the while kept all these things, and ponder'd them in her Heart. She secretly weigh'd all Matters in her private Meditations, silently comparing one thing with another, and wisely considering how God had order'd all his Dealings with them. After which the Shepherds return'd, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them; i. e. they went back to their Flocks, rejoicing at the exact Agreement they found between what they saw, and what the Angel had told them; and likewise giving Praise and Glory to God, as for the Mercy shew'd to Israel in general, so for the great Favour done to them in particular, that they should be the first that should behold the Messias, and the first Publishers of him to the World.

And now follows the principal thing to be consider'd in this Gospel, and that for which it was selected to be read on this Day: and that is contain'd in these words; *And when eight Days were accomplish'd for the circumcising of the Child, his Name was call'd Jesus; which was so nam'd of the Angel, before he was conceiv'd in the Womb.* Where we may observe,

First, The Time and other Circumstances of our Saviour's Circumcision: When eight Days were accomplish'd for the circumcising of the Child, he was circumcis'd; so it must be supply'd to make the Sense perfect, tho by an Ellipsis frequent in the Greek Tongue it be not plainly express'd.

Secondly, The Name then given to him; His Name was called Jesus.

Thirdly, The Giver of that Name, which was an Angel; He was so named of the Angel, before he was conceived in the Womb.

First, The Solemnity of this Day calls upon us to treat of the Circumcision of our Saviour; who, when eight Days were accomplish'd, was circumcis'd after the Custom and Manner of the Jews. There was a Law given to Abraham, requiring all Males to be circumcis'd as a Sign and Seal of that Covenant which God made with him and his Posterity, as we read Gen. 17. it consisted in cutting off the Fore-skin of the Flesh, as a Token of cutting off the Fore-skin of the Heart, and cleansing it from all Impurity. This Ceremony was to be perform'd on the eighth Day after the Birth, not that there was any mystical Signification in that, above any other Number, as some have vainly imagin'd; but partly that

a Sabbath-day might pass over the Infant, before it was done, which was thought to add some ghostly Strength and Perfection to it; and partly because it could not well endure that painful Rite till some time after the Birth, and the doing of it sooner or later, might be attended with greater Danger: and therefore God himself was pleas'd to appoint the eighth Day as the fittest Season for this Operation; which he did partly likewise, that Children might be dedicated to him, and taken into Covenant betimes; which is a Matter of great Benefit and Concernment to them, especially in case of any sudden Death or Danger. Which shews the Cruelty of those Parents, who deny or defer Baptism, that now succeeds in the room of Circumcision.

Now Christ submitted to this painful Rite of Circumcision to fulfil the Law, as he after did to the milder one of Baptism to fulfil the Gospel; and by both he is truly said to fulfil all Righteousness: which things he yielded to not for himself, but for us; for he needed neither, either to make or signify his Purity, but merely to engage and encourage us to the Purity represented by them. So our Church tells us in the Collect for this Day, that *God made his Blessed Son to be circumcis'd and obedient to the Law for Man*. He did it to give us an Example of Obedience, and to free us from the Obligation of that Ceremony; thereby giving Testimony, that he refus'd not the most painful and grievous part of our Duty, but underwent it himself to deliver us from it. Hence the Apostle tells us, that as he was *made of a Woman*, to take our Nature, so was he *made under the Law*, to take our Debt upon him: *Gal. 4. 4.* And this he did at his Circumcision, which brought him under that Obligation. So the same Apostle testifies, that *whoever is circumcis'd, is thereby made a Debtor to keep the whole Law*; *Gal. 5. 3.* Circumcision was the Sign and Seal of the Covenant made with *Abraham* and his Seed; wherein God promis'd to be their God, and they to be his People: and they that receiv'd that Mark in their Flesh, did as it were enter into Bond to keep the whole Law, and observe all the Conditions of that Covenant. Accordingly Christ, who was that promised *Seed of Abraham*, in whom *all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, took this Mark of Circumcision, and thereby this Obligation upon him; at which time, by shedding a few Drops of his Blood, he did as it were sign the Bond, and gave them as an Earnest or Pledg of his shedding all the rest in due time for the Salvation of Mankind. All which things he perform'd to a tittle, by
his

his Active Obedience, observing all the Precepts of the Law ; and by his Passive Obedience, undergoing all the Penalties due to our Breaches of it : and by both he is become our All-sufficient Surety and Saviour.

Thus we see the Nature and Reasons of Christ's Circumcision, which being the Mark of Distinction of *Abraham's* Seed, 'twas requisite he should take it, that he might be known to descend from him, and to take off the Prejudices of the *Jews*, who would never have receiv'd him for the Messiah or promised Seed without it : As also being the Seal of the Covenant between God and his People, 'twas necessary for him to submit to it, that he might take upon him the Obligation of the Law, without which he could never have satisfy'd Divine Justice in our stead. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the Name that was then given him ; *When eight Days were accomplish'd for the circumcising of the Child, his Name was called Jesus.* That Names were given of old at Circumcision, as they are now at Baptism, is a Matter evident from the Practice both of the *Jewish* and the *Christian* Church. *Abraham circumcis'd his Son on the eighth Day, and called his Name Isaac ; Gen. 21. 3, 4.* It came to pass on the eighth Day, that they came to circumcise the Child, and called him *Zacharias*, after the Name of his Father ; *Luke 1. 59.* And here, in compliance with that Custom, at Christ's Circumcision his Name was called *Jesus*. The Reason and Import of this Name is given, *Mat. 1. 21.* *Thou shalt call his Name Jesus ; for he shall save his People from their Sins.* The Hebrew Name *Joshua* in the Old Testament, and the Greek Name *Jesus* in the New, carry much the same Sense and Signification, both of them signifying a Saviour ; only with this difference : *Joshua*, the Saviour of the Old Testament, only sav'd the People of *Israel* from temporal Enemies, and led them into an earthly *Canaan*, where they enjoy'd only a short Rest and Plenty ; but *Jesus*, the Saviour of the New, saves his People from more spiritual and dangerous Enemies, even from Sin and Satan, Death and Hell, and leads them into a heavenly *Canaan*, where they are instated into endless Bliss and Glory. And if the former was worthy the Name of a Saviour for those low and temporal Deliverances, how much more worthy is the latter to be call'd *Jesus*, for the much higher and eternal Salvation he hath wrought for us ? And this he did,

1st, By

1st, By purchasing the Pardon of our Sins, and making Peace with God for us. And,

2^{dly}, By renewing our Natures, and turning us from the Love of Sin to the Practice of Righteousness; the former he did by the Price of his Blood, the latter by the Power of his Grace: both which were necessary in order to the obtaining Salvation for us; the one to procure us a Title and Claim to it, the other to qualify and dispose us for it; and by both he is become our compleat and only Saviour: for *there is no Salvation in any other, neither is there any other Name given under Heaven, by which we can be saved, but only this Name of Jesus*; which ought therefore to be for ever honour'd and ador'd by us,

Thirdly, The last thing here to be consider'd, is the Giver of this Name, contain'd in these words; *Which was so named of the Angel, before he was conceiv'd in the Womb*. 'Tis not often that Men have Names appointed for them before they are conceiv'd or born, especially by a Divine Designation from Heaven; but so it happen'd in this Case of our Saviour, where God the Father (as one observes) was his God-father, and sent an Angel from Heaven as his Proxy, to give the Name in his stead; which Name was first signify'd by the Angel to Mary before her Conception, *Mat. 1. 21. Thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bear a Son, and shalt call his Name Jesus*; and after to Joseph her Husband, upon his first discerning her to be with Child, as we read in the same Chapter. And this Name was repeated again in the Hymns of Zachary and Simeon, Luke 1, together with the Reason for which it was given, which was upon the account of that Salvation which he was to bring both to Jew and Gentile. And here we may observe,

That as our Lord's Name was given upon this good account, so all good Christians have thought fit ever since to give such Names to their Children, as carry some good Signification in them, such as are memorative of some Blessing, or instructive of some Duty. And hence hath proceeded that laudable Practice of giving Children the Names of the Apostles, or other eminent Worthies that have been famous for their Piety and good Works; by that means either to stir them up to a pious Imitation, or to reproach them for degenerating from such excellent Examples. This is the Substance of this Day's Gospel; which may teach us,

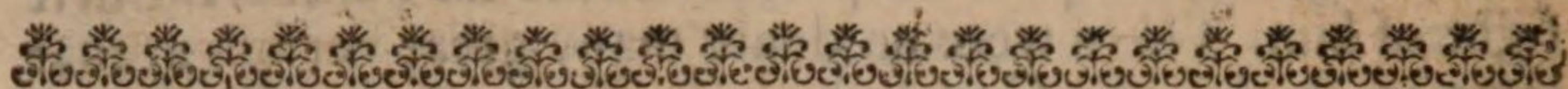
(1.) To

(1.) To magnify the great Condescension of this Son of God, in giving the poor Shepherds next to his Parents the first sight of him. There were no doubt many great Persons at that time in or near the City, whom the Fame of this Birth had drawn thither; yet God did not think fit to send an Angel with this joyful News to any of them, but honour'd the poor Shepherds with the first View of him: by which it appear'd, that *not many Mighty, not many Wise, not many Noble are called; but God hath chosen the weak and the base things of the World to confound the mighty; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* From whence we may gather how much he regarded Meanness above all the Glory and Grandeur of the World, and how welcome in his Infancy this Visit of the Poor was to him, that were sent him by his Father.

(2.) From our Saviour's submitting to be circumcis'd for the Good of others, which he in no wise needed for himself, we may learn to bear some Hardships and Restraints, which are not necessary upon our own accounts, when we find they may help forward the Salvation of others; and to sustain some Difficulties in our own Bodies, thereby to promote the Good of others Souls.

(3.) From the Son of God's being call'd Jesus, a Saviour, merely to save his People from their Sins, let us learn not to despise or neglect so great Salvation; for it will highly aggravate our Condemnation, if when God the Father sent his Son on purpose to save us, we reject the Method of Salvation, and wilfully refuse to be sav'd by him: the greatest Portion of Vengeance will fall to the Lot of such obstinate Sinners, who abuse this unspeakable Mercy, and slight such gracious Offers. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon, and other barbarous Nations that sit in Darkness, and never heard the glad Tidings of a Saviour, than for those to whom Salvation is tender'd, and yet cast it behind their back. Wherefore,

Lastly, Let us beg of God, that his Grace that bringeth Salvation may have its due Effect upon us, that he would be pleas'd to finish that Work in us, which his Son came into the World about: In a word, that he would save us from the Power and Pollution of Sin here, and then we need not fear of his saving us from the everlasting Punishment of it hereafter.



DISCOURSE XXI.

The EPISTLE for the *Epiphany*, or the Manifestation of Christ to the *Gentiles*.

Ephes. iii. 1 ——— 13.

For this cause, I Paul, the Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the Dispensation of the Grace of God, which is given me to you-ward, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of God's manifesting his only-begotten Son to the *Gentiles*, by the leading of a Star; and thence takes occasion to pray, that we who know him now by Faith, may after this Life have the Fruition of his glorious Godhead.

The Epistle for the Day declares to us this great Mystery of Godliness; how God *manifest in the Flesh*, who was first preach'd to the *Jews* only, was after manifested to the *Gentiles* also, and thereby *preach'd and believ'd on in the World*. The Relation of it begins with the Revealer of it, who was *St. Paul*, stil'd therefore the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*. He endur'd great Persecution from the *Jews*, and was now under Imprisonment in *Rome* for preaching of this Doctrine; *For this cause* (saith he) *I Paul, a Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles*. The *Jews* look'd upon themselves as a *peculiar People*, chosen of God, and advanc'd to high and eminent Privileges above others, from whom they were separated by a *Partition-Wall*; they were his adopted Children, *whose were the Fathers, of whom as concerning the Flesh Christ came*; Rom. 9. 4, 5. And therefore could not hear of the *Gentiles*, who were Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, and Aliens to the Commonwealth of *Israel*, that they should become Fellow-Citizens with the Saints; and Members with them of the Household of God. So that the Apostle's enlarging the Pales of the Church, and taking in the out-cast *Gentiles* into Copartnership with them, and making

making them Coheirs and Partakers of the Promises, greatly nettled the *Jews*, and expos'd the Apostle to many and great Hardships from them: for he here tells us, that he was made a Prisoner of Christ for the *Gentiles*; that is, for asserting their Rights and Privileges by Jesus Christ, and vindicating the Liberty of the Gospel from the *Jewish* Yoke; for which, he elsewhere tells us, that he became an Ambassador in Bonds. However, he persisted to publish this Doctrine in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, and to these *Ephesians* also in the foregoing Chapters of this Epistle: which occasion'd the following words, *If ye have heard of the Dispensation of the Grace of God, which is given me to you-ward.* Which words are rather an Affirmation, than a Doubt; like those, Eph. 4. 21. *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus:* the meaning whereof is, that they had indeed heard and been taught those things.

Now the *Dispensation of the Grace of God*, which they could not but know, was the Commission to preach the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, and the Power to settle and constitute Churches among them: *Which Power* (saith he) *was given or granted me to you-ward*; that is, towards the *Gentiles*, to whom I was sent both as a Preacher and an Apostle. For you must needs have heard (as he goes on) *how that by Revelation he made known unto me the Mystery, as I wrote afore in few words:* meaning, that God by Vision or Revelation had imparted to him his secret Will and Purpose of uniting *Jew* and *Gentile* into one Flock, and making them all one in Jesus Christ; of which (saith he) I gave you some brief account in the foregoing Chapters: particularly in Chap. 1. 9, 10. where he tells them, that God had made known to him, and the other Apostles, the *Mystery of his Will*, according to his Good-pleasure, which he had purpos'd in himself; that in the *Dispensation of the Fulness of Time*, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in Heaven and on Earth, even in him. By all which (saith he) when ye read and consider, ye may understand my knowledg in the *Mystery of Christ*; that I do not speak at random or Uncertainties, but that I am thorowly instructed in the *Mystery* which I now reveal unto you. *Which Mystery in other Ages was not made known to the Sons of Men, as it is now reveal'd unto his Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit.* For tho the Calling of the *Gentiles* was a thing promis'd and foretold in the *Old Testament*, yet they who lived

lived in those times had not so clear and distinct a knowledge of this matter, as is now by the Holy Ghost reveal'd unto the Ministers of the Gospel. The Promise made to *Abraham*, that *in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, was but a remote and dark Discovery of this Mystery. *Jacob's* Prophecy, that *at Shiloh's coming, unto him the gathering of the People should be*, is likewise but an obscure Intimation of this matter. Nor was that Promise of giving to the *Messias the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession*, much clearer. These were but obscure Hints of that great Truth which now shines out to us with the brightest Lustre. The fulfilling of these Promises and Prophecies by the preaching and propagating of the Gospel to the Heathen World, hath given us a clearer light into this Mystery, which was in a great measure hid from former Ages; and the many and great Benefits and Privileges of it, were never so well understood, as now they are.

From whence the Apostle proceeds to unfold this Mystery of the calling in of the *Gentiles* in all the parts and particulars of it; viz. *That the Gentiles should be Fellow-Heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel*. Where,

1st, They are said to be Fellow-Heirs with the *Jews*, and intitled to the same Inheritance with them. The time was, when to the *Jews* only appertain'd the Adoption of Sons, who as sole Heirs had the only Right to the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, and what was represented by it, the Kingdom of Heaven; the *Gentiles* being as so many Aliens and Outcasts, that had *none Inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set their foot on*. But Christ, who was the great Heir of all things, adopted the *Gentiles* also into his Family, and by the Spirit of Adoption enabled them to cry, *Abba, Father*: by which means he hath made them Fellow-Heirs, and given them an equal Right to the Inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven. Again,

2^{dly}, They are said to be *of the same Body*; that is, they are united in the same Christian Church, which is frequently in Scripture stil'd the Body of Christ. The *Gentiles* were of old excluded from all the Privileges of the Temple, and by a Partition-Wall separated from the Worship and Service of it: they were confin'd to an outward Court, call'd the Court of the *Gentiles*, wherein they were kept at a distance from the Altar, and all the Sacrifices offer'd

offer'd on it, and receiv'd no Benefit by any of their Expiations. *In Jewry is God known* (saith the Psalmist) *and his Name is great in Israel; at Salem is his Temple, and his Tabernacle in Sion; he gave his Laws unto Jacob, and his Statutes and Ordinances unto Israel: he hath not dealt so with other Nations, neither have the Heathens the knowledge of his ways.* By which it appears, that the *Gentiles* were of old shut out of all the Privileges of the Church, being without God, and without Christ, and so without Hope in the World, as the Apostle describes their forlorn State, *Eph. 2. 12.* but now in Christ Jesus they who were *sometimes afar off* from God, his Covenant, and his Church, are brought nigh by the Blood of his Cross: where there is an Allusion to the Custom in those *Eastern* Countries, where Leagues were wont to be struck and seal'd with Blood. By this Christ is said to be *our Peace*, who hath made both *Jew* and *Gentile* one, and hath broken down the middle Wall of Partition that was in the Temple between them; having abolish'd in his Flesh the Enmity, even the Law of carnal Ordinances, to make in himself, of two distant People, one Man, reconciling both unto God in one Body of his Church by his Cross, thereby slaying the Enmity, and making Peace and Union between them. Again,

3dly, They are here said to be *Partakers of the same Promise in Christ by the Gospel.* There was a Promise made to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, that God would be their God, and they should be to him a People; which Promise was confin'd to their Posterity of the *Jewish* Nation, in which the *Gentiles* had no share: for which reason the Apostle styles them *Strangers to the Covenant of Promise.* But Christ hath since admitted them to the Participation of the same Grace and Favour; so that now the *Gentiles* are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-Citizens with the *Jews*, and being taken into the Household of God, are made Heirs of the same Promise. And all this by the preaching of the Gospel, the receiving whereof was the means of intitling them to these Privileges.

This is the Mystery of the Epiphany, or Christ's Manifestation to the *Gentiles*, whereby he gather'd them into the one Body of the Christian Church, and call'd them to the Means and Hopes of Salvation by the Promulgation of the Gospel: *Whereof* (saith the Apostle, in the next words) *I was made a Minister, according to the Gift of the Grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his Power;*

meaning, that in this great Work God was pleas'd to make use of him as an Instrument, furnishing him with his Grace, and endowing him with the Gift of Tongues and Miracles to that end; thereby certifying his Choice of him, and confirming the Doctrine deliver'd by him. *Unto me* (saith he) *who am less than the least of all Saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ:* Where he ascribes nothing to himself, nor pretends to any Merits or Abilities above others for this Work, but rather owns himself the most unfit for and unworthy of this Office, and ascribes all only to the Grace of God given to him; that he who was a Persecutor, should be made a Promoter of his Church, and the least of all Saints should have the greatest of Trusts committed to him, to make known to the *Gentiles* the inestimable Goodness and Bounty of Christ towards them, in receiving them freely into Covenant, and making them Members of his Church and Family; a Mercy which no Wisdom of Man could have found out, nor would it have gain'd Belief, if the Wisdom of God had not imparted it to us, and commission'd us in an extraordinary manner to reveal it. *And to make all Men see what is the Fellowship of the Mystery, which from the beginning of the World hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.* By this the World is thorowly acquainted with this Mystery, of which we are all Partakers; God having now fully discover'd that to us, which was for a long time kept secret, being lock'd up in the Bosom of God, tho he all along intended it by Jesus Christ; by whom as he made the natural World, and all things in it, so hath he new made the spiritual World, by regenerating the *Gentiles*, and calling them from their Heathen Idolatries to a State of Salvation by him. The end of all which is set forth in the next Verse, *To the intent* (saith the Apostle) *that now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God;* that is, that the Angels and glorify'd Spirits in Heaven, who desire to look into this Mystery, might, by thus gathering all People into one Universal Church, discover the variety of God's Wisdom, in the Dispensations of his Grace, first to the *Jews*, and after to the *Gentiles*, according to the eternal Purpose which he purpos'd in Christ Jesus our Lord. By which it appears that God had, from all Eternity, decreed, in the several Ages of the World, to order Matters after this

this manner, that in the last Age the *Gentiles* and Heathen Idolaters should have Christ reveal'd to them, and that all Mankind should be sav'd by Faith in him. *In whom therefore* (as he adds in the Close) *we have Boldness and Access with Confidence by the Faith of him:* that is, now by Christ's Merits and Mediation, the *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*, and all that believe in him, may have a freedom of Access unto God, and come with boldness to the Throne of Grace, with an assurance of finding Favour and Acceptance. For now (saith St. Peter, upon the *Gentiles* receiving the Holy Ghost) *I perceive of a truth that God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him:* Acts 10. 34, 35. Christ having preach'd Peace to them that were far off, and to them that are nigh, *We have both, thro him, Access by one Spirit unto the Father;* Eph. 2. 17, 18. The *Gentiles* before were excluded from the Temple, and had no share in the Devotions that were offer'd up in it; but now all Nations are indifferently admitted to present their Prayers unto God, and have the same Confidence and Liberty of approaching to him as their Father, having the same Spirit of Christ to intercede for them.

This is briefly the great Mercy contain'd in the Epistle for this Day. From which we may learn,

(1.) To acknowledg and adore the infinite Love of God to the *Gentiles*, of whose Race we are, in turning them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. Herein the Love of God to Mankind appear'd, in that *he would have all Men to be sav'd, and to come to the knowledg of the Truth;* 1 Tim. 2. 4. *God so lov'd the World* (saith St. John) *that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* He now makes no Distinction between Jew and Gentile, for they are all one in Christ Jesus. He came first indeed to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel, whom he gather'd into his Fold, and made them his own Peculiar; but he had other Sheep (as he tells us) that belong'd not to this Fold, meaning the *Gentiles*, them also he brought in, that there might be one Fold and one Flock under the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls. Hence he is said to be a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as the *Glory of his People Israel.* The Greatness of which Mercy will best appear, by considering,

1. The miserable State and Condition of the *Gentiles*, before they receiv'd the Gospel. And,

2. The happy Change made in them by their becoming Christians. As for their former State, it was too forlorn and sad to be describ'd, the Scripture sets it forth by the black Names of Night and Darkness: *Ye were sometimes Darkness* (saith the Apostle to these *Ephesians*) Eph. 5. 8. and elsewhere they are said to *live and walk on still in Darkness*, to *do the Works of Darkness*, and to be even *Darkness it self*. All which Expressions betoken the great Ignorance in which they liv'd, and the great Dangers and Fears to which they were expos'd. Their Ignorance was exceeding gross, even to be felt, for they were destitute of all true Knowledg of God, of Christ, and of themselves; by which means they were carry'd away into the foulest Idolatries, and liv'd in the most abominable Vices and Superstitions. Their Dangers and Fears were far greater than those that attend the blackest Night and Darkness; for like Persons lost and bewildred, they were compass'd about with the Snares of Death, and the Pains of Hell were ever ready to take hold of them. In this sad and gloomy Condition they had still continu'd, and we with them, had not Christ and his Gospel been this Day manifested to them.

But Thanks be to God, a blessed Change hath been wrought by the Mercy and Manifestation of a Saviour this Day; for thereby Darkness is turn'd into Light, Ignorance into Knowledg, Fear into Hope, Sadness into Joy, and Misery into Happiness. As our Saviour told *Zaccheus*, upon his coming to him, *This Day is Salvation come to thine House*; so we may say upon this occasion, this Day is Salvation come to Mankind, for *the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appear'd unto all Men*; Tit. 2. 12. Now Error and Ignorance are vanish'd, being dispel'd by the great Light of the World, as Darkness is by the Approach of the Sun. Now all Heathenish Idolatries and Superstition disappear, and a more rational, spiritual, and consistent way of Worship succeeds in their room. Now Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel, and all the weighty Truths, that relate to the Salvation of Mankind, fully clear'd up, by the Appearance and Doctrine of our Saviour. In a word, what before was hid from the Wise and Prudent, is now reveal'd unto Babes; which great Blessings we are still to celebrate with the loudest Praises and Thanksgivings.

Lastly,

Lastly, We may learn hence to make a right Use and Improvement of this great and undeserv'd Favour to us *Gentiles*, and that is, to *walk in the Light as he is in the Light*, and to make it so *shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*; who hath call'd us miserable Sinners, who lay in Darkness and the shadow of Death, to be the Children of God, and exalted us to everlasting Life. Let not this then be our *Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and we love Darkness rather than Light, because our Deeds are evil*: But let us *walk as Children of Light, and of the Day*, casting off the Works of Darkness, and putting on the Armour of Light, to defend us from all Iniquity. This is the Sense of those many Precepts, to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, and to let our Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ, and the like: all which require us to lead our Lives by the Light we have receiv'd, and to increase in Grace and Virtue as we do in Knowledg; otherwise it will only increase our Guilt, and heighten our Condemnation. The old Vices of the Heathens, in which they liv'd during the times of Ignorance and Darkness, are now monstrously absurd and unbecoming; the Danger and Deformity of them are now plainly laid open to us, and we cannot sin at so cheap a rate as they did. Our Sin will be greater, and the Punishment will be proportionable: wherefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; let us walk in the Light now, that we may e'er long come to the Light of everlasting Life.





DISCOURSE XXII.

The G O S P E L for the Epiphany.

St. Matthew ii. 1—13.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the Days of Herod the King, behold there came wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him, &c.

AFTER the Shepherds, who were of the Race of the Jews, had, by the Direction of an Angel, been at Bethlehem, to see the new-born Messiah, there came soon after some wise Men from the East, of the Race of the Gentiles, by the Guidance of a Star to the same Place, upon the same Errand, to visit and worship the new-born King of the Jews, who was to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of his People Israel. An Account of whose Journey and Visit we have in the Gospel for this Day, which begins thus; *When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the Days of Herod the King, there came wise Men from the East, &c.* Where we may observe,

First, The time of their beginning their Journey, and that was, *when Jesus was born*; they set forth from their Country on the Day of his Nativity, when the Star first appear'd, and they first beheld it, tho they came not to their Journey's end till this Day, which was twelve Days after.

Again, the time of this Expedition is describ'd to be *in the Days of Herod the King*; when an Idumean by Birth rul'd over the Jews, and consequently when the Scepter was departed from Judah, the time appointed by Jacob's Prophecy for Shiloh's, that is, the Messiah's Coming, as we read Gen. 49. 10. then it was that *the wise Men came from the East to Jerusalem.* Who these wise Men were, and

and from whence they came, is variously conjectur'd by learned Men. Some suppose them to be Kings, who came from their several Countries to congratulate and do Homage to this new-born King, in whom both Jew and Gentile were to have an equal share, and to be all united in this Prince of Peace: They who suppose them to be Kings, gather it partly from that Prophecy of *David*, Psal. 72. 10, 11. *The Kings of Tharsis and the Isles shall give Presents; the Kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring Gifts; all Kings shall fall down before him, and all Nations shall do him Service:* Which Prophecy they take to refer to these wise Men, and to be fulfill'd in them. Again, they gather it partly from the great Respect that *Herod* the King shew'd to them, and the familiar Conference he had with them; and partly likewise from the great Treasures they brought with them, and the noble Presents that were offer'd by them; Presents fit only for Kings to give, and for a King to receive.

Others again, by the wise Men, here understand, tho not Kings, yet Persons eminent for their great Learning and Knowledg in all the liberal Arts and Sciences, especially in that of Astronomy, and the Motions of the heavenly Bodies. The word in the Original is *Μάγοι*, Magicians, which was antiently a Name of great Honour and Respect, and had a very innocent and honourable signification; for they were the Priests, the Princes, the Counsellors, the Judges, and indeed the Oracles of the *Eastern* Countries: Tho since, by some Mens abusing that noble Science by judicial Astrology, and prognosticating future Events to impose upon the Ignorant and the Credulous, it is become a Term of Reproach and Infamy; which mov'd our Translators to change that old odious Name of Magicians into this of the wise Men. This for the Persons.

For the Place from whence they came, 'tis here said that they came from the East to Jerusalem. Now from what Parts of the East these Travellers came, is likewise variously conceiv'd: Some making them to come from *Arabia* and *Saba*, according to the Prophecy of *David*, Psal. 72. 10. others from *Persia* and *Chaldea*, where these Magicians most ly inhabited; but these lying all Eastward from *Jerusalem*, it is a Matter of no great Consequence to be too solicitous about it.

But what was the Errand upon which they came? Why, that the next words declare; when they were come to *Jerusalem*, they enquir'd, saying, *Where is he that is born King*

King of the Jews? for we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him. The Design of their Coming was to find out the new-born Saviour, whose Birth had been long expected, and was then made known to the World. The Signal that brought them thither, was the sight of a new and uncommon Star, whose Guidance they follow'd, to the end that they might do their Homage, and pay their Adorations to him; which still is, or ought to be, the great End of all our Coming to him.

But for the better clearing of this Matter, we must note, that about the time of our Saviour's Birth, there appear'd in the Heavens a new and strange Star, which was never seen before, of a greater Brightness and different Motion from all other Stars: which these wise Men of the *East*, who were curious and well skill'd in Astronomy, observing, they were amaz'd, and cast in their Mind what manner of Star this should be that never appear'd before, concluding it to preface something of more than ordinary Consideration; and calling to mind what they had heard and read of a new King to be born to the *Jews*, and particularly the Prophecy of *Balaam*, concerning a Star that should go before and prefigure him, *Numb. 24. 17.* they concluded this Star to signify the Birth of the *Messias*, so long expected by the *Jews*. And having (as 'tis probably suppos'd) some Divine Revelation made to them about it, as they had about their Return into their own Country, they resolv'd upon a Journey, to visit and pay their early Devotions to him. At their setting forth, they soon perceiv'd this Star to go before them as a Guide, and that as well by Day as by Night, and so continu'd to conduct them to *Jerusalem*. At their Coming there, the Star disappear'd, which put them upon other Methods of Enquiry, saying, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* They doubted not the Truth of the thing, but only ask'd the Place where they might find him, in order to their doing Homage to him. But the Coming of these wise Men to *Jerusalem*, and their making such open and earnest Enquiry after a new King, as also their declaring their sight of a Star in the Heavens that led them there upon that Errand, began to raise great Jealousies in the mind of *Herod* and all *Jerusalem*: So the next words tell us, *When Herod the King had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* *Herod* was a Stranger King to that Nation, and the first that was not of the *Jewish* Line: and to hear
of

of one newly born King of the Jews, and finding many great and Wise Men come from far, enquiring where they might have access to and adore him; this could not but put *Herod* and all the People of the City into a general Consternation. *Herod* therefore fearing his being supplanted and undermined by this new Prince, gather'd all the chief Priests and Scribes of the People together, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born: He concealing his Design, gravely consulted the Sanhedrim and other learned Expositors of the Law and Prophets, what Place their Books assign'd for the Birth of their expected Messiah: They presently answer'd and said unto him, Bethlehem of Judah, for thus it is written by the Prophet; And thou Bethlehem of the Land of Judah, art not the least among the Princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Governour that shall rule my People Israel; *Micah* 5. 2. This still encreas'd his suspicion, which yet he wisely kept to himself, without any outward Discovery of it to any: and that he might learn as much as possible, he privily call'd to him the Wise Men; and to get what he could out of them, he first imparts to them the Place of this Saviour's Birth, which was Bethlehem a small City of David, about six or seven Miles distant from Jerusalem, and then diligently enquired of them what time the Star appear'd; that by a secret and punctual account of the first Appearance of the Star, he might know the Age of the Child, and thereby the better carry on and effect his bloody purpose. When this was done, he dismiss'd the Travellers, and sent them to Bethlehem, saying unto them, Go and search diligently for the young Child, and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. Where he wills them, after they had found this great Prince, in their return to take Jerusalem in their way, and to bring him Intelligence of it, that he might also pay his Duty to this Messiah and Heir of all Nations; seeking to cover his malicious Design under a colour of Devotion, and pretending to worship, when he intended to destroy him. However,

These Eastern Sages knowing nothing of *Herod's* secret Purposes, took their leave of him; and when they had heard the King, departed, and went on their Journey. No sooner had they left that City in their way to Bethlehem, but the Star which disappear'd during their stay at Jerusalem, appear'd to them again, and directed them in their way; for, Lo! the Star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. The celestial

celestial Guide, which had awhile withdrawn its Light from a City unworthy of it, shone out again upon them, and left them not till it brought them to the end of their intended Journey. This new Appearance of their former Director, fill'd them with no small Delight and Exultation, and gave them a full Assurance of the good Success and happy Event of their Expedition; for *when they saw the Star*, 'tis said, *they rejoiced with exceeding great Joy*: Their Spirits were mightily reviv'd at the fresh sight of their old Guide and Companion; the Star which occasion'd their first setting out, being thereby fully satisfy'd, that God approv'd of and would prosper their Undertaking.

When they were come to *Bethlehem*, and the Place where the Divine Babe lay, *they went into the House*, and *saw the young Child with Mary his Mother*, and *fell down and worshipped him*. How this Star pointed out the House where the young Child was, when the height and distance of the Stars must needs leave Men in great uncertainty, and no one City, much less one single House can be pitch'd upon by any particular Direction; how (I say) this could be, is a matter variously conjectur'd by learned Men. Some think that this Star left its Orb and descended lower, and so stood just over the House. Others, that it kept its Station, and darted down a long Stream of Light, which pointed to the House where he was: Others again, that whereas the Star moved along with them before, when they came to the Place it ceas'd its Motion, and stood still, and thereby directed to it. *St. Chrysostom* and others of the Fathers, most probably think, that this was no real Star, but a new created Meteor or Comet in the Air, which moved along over their Heads, and so directed them, as the cloudy Pillar did the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, by its standing still at their coming to the Place. But however that be, most certain it is, that it led these wise Men to the House where this new-born King was, whom tho they found in low and mean Circumstances, yet that hinder'd not their humble Prostrations and Adorations; for *they fell down and worshipped him*, according to the Prediction, *Kings shall fall down before him, all Nations shall do him Reverence*. And having paid these Divine Honours and Homage to this Infant King, these great Persons (for so we see these *Magi* or wise Men were) brought Presents of the richest and most valuable Things of their Country, and offer'd them to him: so the next words tell us, *And when they had opened their Treas-*

Treasures, they presented unto him Gifts, Gold, and Frankincense, and Myrrh. 'Twas the Custom of the Oriental Sages, never to approach any great Personage without some Present; accordingly they here bring some of the best and most precious Gifts their Country was fam'd for, and presented them to him. Hereby was fulfilled that Prophecy of the Psalmist, *The Kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring Gifts:* And likewise that of the Prophet *Isaiah*, which specifies the Gifts, *Isa. 60. 6. They shall bring Gold and Incense, and shall shew forth the Praises of the Lord.* We read that *Abraham* gave to the Sons of *Chetura*, Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, which had been presented to him by the Kings of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*; suitable whereunto these *Arabians* presented the same Gifts to Christ, the Seed of *Abraham*, at his Nativity. Hereunto some refer that of the Psalmist, *Thy Garments smell of Myrrh, Aloes, and Cassia:* As also that of *Solomon* in the *Canticles*, *A Bundle of Myrrh is my Beloved unto me,* Cant. 1. 13. Which things being so fragrant and odoriferous, could not but be an Offering of a sweet-smelling Savour.

And now these *Eastern* Magi or Wise Men, having attain'd the End of their Journey, and fulfill'd the Errand they came about, by seeing the new-born King of the *Jews*, and doing their Homage and Devotion to him, they think of returning home to their own Country. But while they were musing hereupon, they were in the Night before they set forth, warned of God in a Dream, that they should not return to *Herod*, but depart into their own Country another way; which they accordingly did. God Almighty knew the malicious and murderous Intention of *Herod* towards this young rival King, and therefore prudently prevented and defeated it by this Diversion; willing these Travellers not to go back by *Jerusalem*, by which they came, nor to give *Herod* any Intelligence of the Child, as he desired, but to make their nearest and speediest way home another way: and he who brought them thither to see his Son, would safely conduct them back to their own Homes. Thus we see the Progress of these *Eastern* Sages, as to their coming and going; the Guide that led them; the Errand on which they came, the Success of their Journey, and their safe Return; all which are contain'd in the Gospel for this Day: from which we may learn the following Lessons. As,

1st, From the leading these Wise Men to Christ, we may learn to adore the great Grace and Goodness of God, in bringing in the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews*, and uniting them both in one Body in Christ: This was one of the most glorious Mysteries of Divine Providence that was ever manifested to the Sons of Men, of which we ought to have the greater Sense; because we are descended from those *Gentiles*, and partake of the same Blessings and Benefits with them. These *Eastern* Sages were the Figures and First-Fruits of us *Gentiles*, who tho once far off, are now brought nigh to God, and receiv'd into his House and Family. Hereby the Promise made to *Abraham* was fulfill'd, that *in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*. And likewise that Prophecy of *Jacob*, *To him shall the Gathering of the People be*; Gen. 49. 10. In which we being so nearly concern'd, we can never enough praise God, nor be sufficiently thankful for it.

2^{dly}, From God's leading these Wise Men or Astronomers to Christ by a Star, we may observe his great Wisdom in giving them such a Signal as was most likely to move, and work most powerfully upon them; for their Studies lying chiefly that way, it was more apt to lead and prevail with them than any other Miracle: Curiosity as well as Religion, would encline them to see the Event of that, to which by the Course of their Studies they were most naturally dispos'd. A Vision, a Prophecy, or a Voice from Heaven (as one hath well observ'd) might have signify'd the thing as plainly; but a Star did it to them in a more acceptable manner. The like course we find our Saviour after took to win Disciples to him, *viz.* by adapting Arguments to their Tempers, Customs, and Employments. When Fishermen were to be converted, he did it by an extraordinary Draught of Fishes: when he was to draw the Multitude after him, he did it by feeding five Thousand of them with five barley Loaves and a few little Fishes; and from thence led them to desire the Bread of Life to feed their Souls to eternal Life: And here, when Men vers'd in Astronomy were to be brought to Christ, it was done by the Motion of a Star: which may teach us, among other Arts of Persuasion, to use the like Method upon the like Occasions.

3^{dly}, From the Star's disappearing whilst the Wise Men staid at *Jerusalem*, we may learn not to expect extraordinary

nary Means when ordinary Means may serve the turn. When these Wise Men were remote from *Jerusalem*, and uncertain of their Way to it, a Star was necessary to direct them thither; but being come there, they might be otherwise inform'd in the Way to *Bethlehem*, and need no extraordinary Direction to bring them to Christ: whilst we have God's holy Word and Sacraments, the ordinary Means of Salvation afforded to us, we may not look for Inspirations or a Voice from Heaven; and having *Moses* and the Prophets to acquaint us with the Will of God and a Future State, we are to hear them, without expecting one to come from the Dead for our better Information.

4thly, From the Star's appearing again after they left *Jerusalem*, we may learn, that God is not wanting in giving all due Assistance and Encouragement in going unto Christ. When these Travellers found the People of *Jerusalem* cold and careless about finding out or doing Homage to this new-born Prince, lest they should be discouraged, or abate their Zeal, God gave them their former Guide to conduct them to him. When ordinary Methods seem to fail, God will not leave us destitute of such farther help as shall be necessary for us; his Grace shall be sufficient to carry us through all Difficulties and Discouragements, if we are willing to know and go on in our Duty.

5thly, From the great Joy of these Travellers, when they saw the Star restor'd to them, we may learn to rejoice in the Light of the Gospel, and be thankful for every Measure or Degree of Knowledg imparted to us. The *Day-Star from on high hath risen*, and shines out upon us; let us therefore rejoice in the Light, and come into the Brightness of his rising; let us walk and work by the Light, and then we shall have it more abundantly.

Lastly, From these Wise Mens coming to Christ, and worshipping of him, which was the wisest thing they ever did, let us follow their Example in going to him, and in falling down to worship and kneel before him. As they open'd their Treasures, and presented him with the richest things they had, so let us open the Treasures of our Hearts, and present our selves, both Body and Soul unto him; and by so doing, he will e'er long present both blameless and without spot to our heavenly Father. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

The EPISTLE for the First Sunday after
the *Epiphany*.

ROM. xii. 1—6.

I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service. And be not conform'd to this World, but be transform'd by the renewing of your Mind, &c.

HAVING celebrated the Nativity and Circumcision of our Blessed Saviour, together with his *Epiphany* or Manifestation to the *Gentiles*, the great Mercies to be remember'd in the late Festival of *Christmas*, our Church on this Sunday immediately following them, very fitly puts us upon making some return for these inestimable Favours. We read, that Wise Men of the Race of the *Gentiles*, came from the East by the Direction of a Star to *Bethlehem*, to do Homage to the new-born Son of God, and to present him with the most precious Things which their Countries afforded; as the Shepherds, by the Direction of an Angel, had before done in behalf of the *Jews*. And now it lies upon us to do something in like manner: To which end our Apostle here directs us, in consideration of God's Mercies, to make a Present of our selves to him.

The Collect for the Day beseeches God to accept of the Tribute and Acknowledgment of our Prayers that are offer'd up to him, and withal, to give us the Knowledg of his Will, with Grace and Power faithfully to perform it.

The Epistle for the Day beseeches us to present our Bodies unto him as a living, holy, and acceptable Sacrifice, which is our reasonable Service.

It hath been an antient Custom, which continues to this Day, in the beginning of a new Year, to make some Present

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sent to our Friends and Benefactors, as a Token of that Love and Respect we bear them. In conformity to which Practice, our Church calls upon us at this time, to make a Present to God the Father, for sending us his Son, the best Friend and Benefactor to Mankind the World ever had. And since Heaven hath made such a noble and divine Present unto us, we ought in reason to think of presenting something back again; which if we will take the Apostle's Advice, is best done by dedicating and presenting our selves to him, to begin the new Year with new Resolutions of serving him, and to renew our Purposes of walking before him in newness of Life. *I beseech you therefore* (saith the Apostle) *by the Mercies of God, &c.*

Indeed the Mercies of God are so many and great, that they may justly command and challenge the best Returns that we can make for them, which yet must fall infinitely short of the Worth and Dignity of his Blessings. The general Mercies of Creation and Providence call for our daily Acknowledgments and our devoutest Adorations; for *it is he that hath made us, and not we our selves*: and therefore *let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*; giving our selves back again into his hands, out of which we came. Hence we find *Cain* and *Abel* in the very beginning of the World, bringing their several Presents to their Maker; the one the First-Fruits of the Earth, the other the Firstlings of his Flock, and both in token of Gratitude to him that made them: which were the Original of all the Sacrifices and Oblations that follow'd after.

But the more peculiar Mercies of God, by which the Apostle here beseeches us to devote our selves to him, are the signal Favours of our Redemption; such as the Pardon of Sin, the Justification of our Persons by Faith in Christ, and the Hopes of Life and Salvation, which are wholly founded on the Merits of his Death and Satisfaction: which Mercies are too great for any sufficient Compensation, and yet require something to be render'd by way of Acknowledgment.

But what is the Present we are here directed to make to him? Why, not barely the Calves of the Lips, or the slender Sacrifice of the Tongue, which are too mean Oblations for such Benefits: and cursed is he who having in his Flock a Male, shall offer unto the Lord a corrupt Thing. But we are to present unto the Lord the best that we have,
and

and like *Æschines*, a poor Scholar of *Socrates*, who having no better thing to give, gave himself to his Master, as the best Requitall he could make for his Care and Kindness. In like manner, the Apostle here minds us of the best Return we can make for the Mercies of God, and that is by presenting our Bodies unto him. Where the Body must not be understood separately, or exclusively of the Soul, as if the one would be accepted without the other; no, the Body without the Soul is but a heavy lumpish Carcase, a dead, and not a living Sacrifice, which will find no acceptance.

But the Body being the Mansion and Receptacle of the Soul, is in Scripture often us'd to signify both; and so to present our Bodies, is to present our selves, our whole Man, both Body and Soul unto him. For tho here mention is made of the Body only, yet we find God Almighty elsewhere calling chiefly for the Soul; *My Son give me thy Heart*; Prov. 23. 26. And our Saviour charges us to love him with all our Heart and with all our Soul: which alone gives life to it, and renders it an acceptable Sacrifice.

The truth is, our Bodies and Souls are both his; he made them by his Power, and redeem'd them with the Price of his own Blood, so that *we are not our own*, and must therefore glorify him with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his. For since we receive both from him, we are in Justice and Gratitude bound to return both to him. Beside,

Christ gave himself for us; he assum'd a Body like ours merely that he might suffer in it, and offer it up for us, and he likewise made his Soul an offering for Sin: and having liv'd and dy'd in both for our sake, how can we do less, than return both to him?

Now the Apostle, to encourage us thus to offer up our selves unto God, recommends it to us under a fourfold Consideration.

1st, As 'tis a *living Sacrifice*; partly in opposition to the dead Sacrifices, that were offer'd up under the Law; and partly in respect of the spiritual Life added to it by the Quicknings of the Spirit, in opposition to a spiritual Death in Trespases and Sins.

2dly, This is here stil'd a *Holy Sacrifice*, and so it becomes by being dedicated unto God; for whatsoever is consecrated unto him, is thereby separated from common Uses, and appropriated to his Service, and so becomes holy unto the Lord.

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3dly, This is farther call'd an *acceptable Sacrifice unto God*, because in giving our selves, we give all that we have to him; and God who accepteth according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not, is ever well pleas'd with such Sacrifices. Hence we read that the Widow's Mite cast into the Treasury, was more and better accepted, than the richer Presents of wealthier Persons, because she cast in all that she had. In like manner, the presenting our selves unto God, is an Offering of a sweet-smelling Savour, because 'tis the best and all that we have.

4thly, This is moreover said to be *our reasonable Service*; either because in presenting our selves we offer up to him rational Creatures, and such as are endow'd with a Mind and Reason, whereas the legal Sacrifices consisted only in offering up of brute Beasts, that wanted that Perfection, and were void of all Reason; or else because the presenting our selves to him, is but just and agreeable to right Reason: for since God the Father hath given us his Son, and with him hath freely given us all things; and since God the Son hath given himself even to Death for us, 'tis highly fit and reasonable, that we should give our selves unto him, who hath so dearly bought us.

But how are we to present our Bodies unto God? Why, in that the following part of this Epistle will direct us. As,

1st, We are to present our Bodies unto God, by preserving the Purity of them, and keeping them free from the Pollutions of the World. To this we are exhorted in the next Verse, *And be not conform'd to this World, but be transform'd by the renewing of your Mind; that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God.* Where we are caution'd against Conformity with the World, that we may be the more conformable to the Nature and Will of God. But here we must note, that the Apostle, in willing us not to conform to this World, doth not require us to abandon all Company and Commerce with the Men of this World, for then, as he elsewhere tells us, we must go out of the World; or retire into Desarts and Solitudes, which would be to flee from the Enemy, that we are to face and vanquish. Nor does it forbid all Compliance with the innocent Customs and Conversation of the World: for God having made us sociable Creatures, hath thereby oblig'd us to all the decent Rules and Orders of Society; and to do otherwise, favours more of the Moroseness of a

Pharisee, than the Meekness of a good Christian. Nor yet does this Nonconformity to the World, condemn all the innocent Modes and Fashions of the World in point of Attire: for tho the Word *μη συζηματιζεδε* in the Original seem to refer to the outward Scheme, Figure and Fashions of the World, which hath made some expound it so, as to condemn all varying of Dresses, and following of new and changeable Fashions; yet these put too strict a Sense upon the Word, which relates more to the Course and Fashion of Mens Lives and Manners, than to the Fashion of their Habits or Garments, which vary according to the difference of Time, Places, and Countries. Indeed, where these things are made the Instruments of Lust, and administer to Pride and Vanity, they then become sinful, and are a piece of that Nonconformity to the World, which we are to observe and practise. But because the Evil of these things lies more in the Heart, than in the outward Garb, and a Beggar may be more proud and wanton in his Rags, than a good Christian in finer and more fashionable Attire; we may not pass too hard a Censure on these things, nor think all Compliance in these innocent Matters to be absolutely and universally condemn'd.

But what then is that Nonconformity to the World, that is here forbidden? Why, the World is in Scripture frequently taken for the Vices, evil Customs, and wicked Practices of the World: in which sense St. *John* tells us, that the *whole World lies in Wickedness*; and hath summ'd up all that is in it, under three Heads, *viz. the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*. These are the Charms or fiery Darts, with which the World daily assaults and wounds the Hearts of many.

Now as to conform to the World, is to yield to these Temptations, and to be led away by the Baits and Allurements of the World; so not to conform to the World, is to resist all these Charms, to turn the deaf Ear to all bad Counsel and Company, and not to suffer our selves to be corrupted or carry'd away by the Wiles or Temptations of either. In short, not to be conform'd to the World, is to abandon the evil Principles, and sinful Practices of it; not to embrace bad Opinions, tho much in vogue, nor follow bad Examples, tho they may be many and great; but to chuse rather to walk in the solitary Paths of Vertue, than to follow a Multitude to do evil.

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But what is it to *be transform'd by the renewing of the Mind*? the Word in the Original is μεταμορφῶδε, which signifies a Metamorphosis or Change of the whole Man, whereby it is turn'd from bad Habits and Customs, to better Desires and Dispositions: and this is here said to be done *by the renewing of the Mind*; that is, by altering the whole Bent and Inclination of the Soul, that whereas it was before carried out and set only on earthly Objects, it is now fix'd chiefly on Heaven and Heavenly Things, and brought to desire nothing in comparison of them: by which it comes to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect Will of God, so as to prefer and follow it before and above all other things.

If then we would present our Bodies unto God, so as to make them a holy and acceptable Sacrifice, we must keep them pure from the corrupt Practices and Pollutions of the World, not making the Members of Christ to become the Members of an Harlot, but possessing our Vessels in Sanctification and Honour; that our Members be no longer Instruments of Sin, but Instruments of Righteousness unto God: so will they become the undefil'd Mansions of the Son of God, and be consecrated as the Temples of the Holy Ghost. And because our Souls too are to be presented with them, we must labour to have them sanctify'd and renew'd by the Graces of the Holy Spirit, that being transform'd into the Image of God, they may be a fit Present for him. And this is the first way of presenting our selves unto him.

The Second is, by the Lowliness and Humility both of Body and Mind: And to this we are exhorted in the next Verse; *For I say, thro the Grace given to me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith.* He that will dedicate himself to God, must not think too highly of himself, for that will create such a Self-sufficiency, as will make him think he hath no need to seek to, or depend upon any other; and he that will demean himself, as becomes him towards others, must think soberly of himself, lest he be drawn to overlook and despise those that are far above him. Pride and Arrogance are the great Obstacles of all true Devotion, for they hinder Men from giving themselves to God, or receiving any good Thing from him. *He that exalteth himself (saith our Saviour) shall be abas'd; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.* The way to
rise

rise in God's Favour, is to be low in our own Eyes; for *God resisteth the Proud, and sheweth Grace and Favour to the Humble.* He filleth the Hungry, that depend upon him, with good things, when the Rich, and they that are full of themselves, are sent empty away. He that overvalues himself, sets a high price upon nothing; and such as will not part with or present their Bodies and Souls unto God, which are both his, will in the end lose both. And therefore the Apostle, to incline Men to make this Present of themselves unto God, exhorts them not to entertain any high Thoughts of themselves, which will beget such a Fondness, as will render them averse to make any Offering of themselves even unto the Lord; but to think meanly and soberly of themselves, *according as God hath given to every one the Measure of Faith*: for God dealeth out his Gifts in various Measures and Proportions on the Sons of Men; to some he giveth more, to others less, to all some; which they are to use not for Vanity or Ostentation, but to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of one another. And to check all Pride and Presumption in themselves, they are often told that these various Blessings distributed among them, are but Gifts and Largeesses, proceeding entirely from the free Grace and Bounty of their Maker, not Debts due to their Merits, or bestow'd upon them for their own Worthiness. Hence the Apostle, to keep Men humble and lowly-minded under the highest Attainments, asks the Question, *What hast thou, O Man, which thou hast not receiv'd? And if thou hast receiv'd it, why boastest thou thyself, as if thou receivedst it not?* Moreover,

Lastly, To hinder the Swelling and Impostumation of the Mind, and to keep Men from being pufft and lifted up above their Brethren, the next words mind them of the mutual Need and Dependence they all stand in one towards another: *For as we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the same Office; so we being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another.* Where the Apostle, by an Allusion to the natural Body, shews the reason of the Diversity of Gifts, and the different Measures of Faith granted to the several Members of Christ's Church, together with the several Duties and Dependence of each upon the rest. For as there are many Members in the natural Body, so are there in the mystical Body of Christ; and as all the Members of the natural Body have not the same Office, but have different Functions

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tions and Operations, as the Necessities of the Body require; so neither have all the Members of Christ's Church the same Office, but have different Functions and Employments, and likewise different Degrees and Measures of Gifts, as the Wants of the Church and Mens several Places in it call for. And as all the Members are united in one Body without Division or Separation, so we being many, are or ought to be one Body in Christ, of which he is the Head, and we as Fellow-Members in respect of one another. By all which, the Apostle would subdue all Pride, Contention, and Separation in the Church of Christ, and instil the great Lessons of Humility, Peace, and Unity among all its Members.

Thus we see the Drift and Design of the Epistle for this Day, together with the seasonable and important Duties it recommends to us; which, by way of Application, I must remind and inculcate upon you. And,

1st, Let me, as the Apostle here doth, intreat and exhort you *by the Mercies of God*, especially those we remember at this season, *to present your Bodies unto him, as a living, holy, and acceptable Sacrifice*: which will be return'd to you better than he receiv'd it, refin'd from all Impurity and Imperfection, and made like unto his glorious Body. Let us then devote both Body and Soul unto him, with all the Powers and Faculties of each, to be employ'd in his Service: this is an Oblation that the poorest may make, and yet is more acceptable than any other thing that the richest can offer. Let none say, he hath nothing to give, when he hath himself to bestow; which is a Sacrifice of a more grateful Savour, than the sweetest Incense or Perfumes. 'Tis true indeed, thou hast nothing of thy own to give, for both thy Body and Soul are his already; and yet he is pleas'd to accept at thy hands his own Gifts, and none (one would think) should grudg to give him that: he asks nothing but what he hath many ways a right and title to, and yet he is not only delighted with, but rewards the Return of that which was his own before. And who that hath any Sense or Reason, but must think that to be a *reasonable Service*?

Let us therefore give, or rather restore our selves back again unto the Lord, not living to our selves, but to him who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity. Let us consecrate our Bodies as so many living Temples

unto him, and let all the Members of them become the Instruments of his Honour. Let the Mouth praise him with joyful Lips, and the Tongue sing of his Honour; let the Hands be often lifted up to him, and open'd in bounty to his Members. Let the Feet walk in his Ways, and run with Chearfulness the Paths of his Commandments.

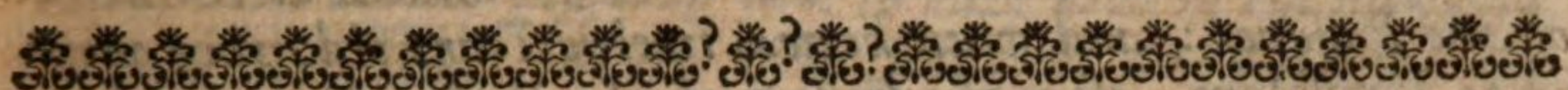
And to compleat the Sacrifice, let us dedicate our Souls to him as the living Monuments of his Praise, and devote all the Faculties of them to the setting forth of his Glory. To which end,

2dly, Let both be kept pure from the Defilements of the World, to attend the Service of their Maker; avoiding all sinful Conformity to the World, in the Vices, Errors, and wicked Practices of it, and having our Natures renew'd by the Graces of the Holy Spirit, our Minds enlighten'd with the Knowledg of God, our Wills and Affections rectify'd to the loving and obeying of him; and in a word, to have our whole Man transform'd into the Image of God, from Glory to Glory. Again,

3dly, Let us learn from our Saviour to be *meek and lowly in Heart*, not thinking more highly of our selves than we ought to think; but to think soberly and modestly, in honour preferring one another: for Wisdom and Happiness will be to the Humble, but Folly and Ruin will attend the Proud.

Lastly, Let us learn to live in the Unity and Communion of the Church, as the only means of living in Love, Peace, and Amity with one another. For the Church being but one Body, there should be no Schism or Division in it; but all the Members are to be join'd and united in it in one Communion under Christ the Head, that they may be fitted for the Communion of the Saints for ever in Heaven: which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXIV.

The G O S P E L for the first Sunday after *Epiphany*.

St. Luke ii. 41, to the end.

Now his Parents went to Jerusalem every Year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve Years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the Custom of the Feast, &c.

THE foregoing Gospels concerning our Saviour, related what happen'd before, at, and after his Birth, whilst he was in the state of Infancy; and our late Discourses upon them, left him with *Mary* and *Joseph* at *Bethlehem* in an Inn, with the Babe lying in his Cradle of a Manger, where even at that Age he was ador'd by Angels, visited by the Shepherds, worshipped by the Wise-men that came from the East, and magnify'd by all that came near him. Here they remain'd till *Herod*, jealous of this new-born King, and fearing what might happen to him and his Kingdom hereby, cast about him how he might destroy this holy Infant. Of which *Joseph* being warn'd by an Angel in a Dream, and commanded to take the Child and his Mother, and to flee into *Egypt*, he accordingly did it, taking the young Child and his Mother by night, and departing into *Egypt*. Immediately after their Departure, *Herod* executed his intended Cruelty, slaying all the Male Children in *Bethlehem*, hoping thereby to have slain our Lord; but God protected him, by timely sending him away, and by his safe Arrival in *Egypt*, where he staid till the Death of *Herod*. After which, *Joseph* was commanded by an Angel to return again to his own Country; and accordingly they return'd thence, and came to *Nazareth* in *Galilee*, where we read little or nothing of him, till he came to be twelve years old: and of what happen'd to him then, we have an account in the Gospel for this Day; which begins thus:

Now his Parents went every Year to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover; and when he was twelve Years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the Custom of the Feast. For the better understanding of these words, we must note, that there was a Law of God in being at that time, requiring all Males to repair to Jerusalem three times in a year, at the three great Feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Of which Law we read, *Exod. 23. 14, 15, &c.* where they are commanded to appear in the Temple, and to bring their Offerings and Sacrifices at those solemn times. And the same Law was renew'd again, *Deut. 16. 16.* where the same thing is requir'd at the same seasons. Of this Law, *Joseph* and *Mary*, being devout and religious Persons, were punctual Observers; for 'tis here said, they went to Jerusalem every Year at the solemn Feasts. And here we may note farther, that tho the Law requir'd only the Males to attend at those seasons, and those too only from twenty Years old to sixty, and so Women and Children were dispens'd with from taking those Journies; yet at the great Paschal Feast, call'd the Passover, or the Feast of unleavened Bread, it was usual from antient times, for the Women and their Children, as well as Men, to go up thither; as we read, *1 Sam. 1. 3, 4.* where 'tis said, that *Elkanah with his two Wives and Sons went up out of his City yearly to worship.* Accordingly the Evangelist here tells us, that *Mary* and *Joseph*, with their Son being twelve Years old, went up to Jerusalem, according to the Custom of the Feast. Where being come, he observ'd the Feast, in all the Ceremonies of it, with great Diligence and Devotion. The Report of the *Magi* and the Doctors of the *Jews* assembled by *Herod*, had carry'd the Fame of him to Jerusalem long before; and many there, by his transcendent Knowledge and extraordinary Wisdom far above his Years, discern'd him to be a Divine Person: which yet he endeavour'd as yet to conceal, and so demean'd himself with great Modesty and Discretion.

When they had fulfill'd the days, that is, when the Feast was ended, as *Joseph* and *Mary* return'd, the Child *Jesus* tarried behind in Jerusalem, and *Joseph* and his Mother knew not of it. This Son of God, in obedience to his Will, secretly withdrew himself from his earthly Parents, to mind the business of his heavenly Father. And accordingly, when they were departed, his Zeal and Fervour carry'd him back to the Temple, where he abode for three days.

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But his Parents *supposing him to have been in the Company*, and going a little before with some of his Kindred and Friends, made the more haste after him, to overtake him in the way, and so *went on a day's journey* homeward; and at night *sought him among their Kinsfolk and Acquaintance*, but found him not. And here the Parents, the tender Mother especially, missing her dear and holy Child, began (as we may easily imagine) to be in great fear and solicitude about him; they cast in their Minds a thousand Doubts, where and how he might be, fearing that some had way-laid him, to execute their bloody and malicious Designs upon him, and blaming their own Negligence in not more carefully attending on him, whom God had so honour'd, and entrusted to their Guardianship. These and many more such sad Thoughts afflicted their troubled Minds. Here some have represented the Blessed Virgin as shedding many a Tear, and fetching many deep Sighs, complaining with the Spouse in the *Canticles*, *By night I sought him whom my Soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not: I will rise now, and go about the City in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my Soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.* Cant. 3. 1, 2.

But what course did they take, after all this Sorrow and Sadness, to find him? Why, the next words tell us, that *when they found him not, they turned back to Jerusalem, seeking him.* Missing him that night upon the Road, they rose early the next morning, and return'd back with speed to *Jerusalem*; where, with the Spouse in the *Canticles*, they went about the streets and broad ways of the City, to seek him whom their Souls loved, but found him not: at night repairing to their former Lodging, neither there could they hear any tidings of him, which made them pass that night also in very great heaviness and melancholy. The next morning bethinking with themselves of the Piety and Devoutness of his Temper, they repair'd to the Temple, which he ever held in great veneration; and there they happily found him. What Transports and Extasies of Joy they felt within them, at the sight and meeting of him, is a matter better to be conceiv'd than express'd.

Now in the Temple about the outward Court, there were certain Porches or Chambers, where the Goods and Treasure of the Temple were laid up; and likewise several Rooms, where the Doctors expounded the Law unto the People, and instructed the Youth in Learning; disputing

putting among themselves, and stating any hard Questions that were mov'd or offer'd to them; as we may gather from *Jer.* 35. 2, 4. & *Chap.* 36. 12, 26. Here it was that the Holy Child Jesus, after his withdrawing from his Parents, betook himself; and here 'tis said they found him, *sitting in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing and asking them Questions.* This young Lord hearken'd with great Attention to the Lectures and Discourses of the Doctors, sometimes moving Questions to them, as concerning *John's* Baptism, whether it was from Heaven or of Men? and concerning Christ's being the Son of *David*, asking, from *David's* calling him Lord, how he could be his Son? And when he found that these and the like Questions put them hard to it to resolve, he answer'd them himself, insomuch that *all that heard him were astonish'd at his Understanding and Answers.* They admir'd him at that Age, and plainly perceiv'd there was something in him that was divine and extraordinary, shewing at once the Modesty of a Child, and the Gravity and Authority of a Lawgiver sent from Heaven.

At this time his Parents, who had been in great Concern and Quest for him, happen'd to come in, *and when they saw him, they were amaz'd:* between the Trouble of seeking him, and the Joy of finding him where he was, they were almost beside themselves, and scarce knew what they said or did; but after a little Recollection, his Mother said unto him, *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy Father and I have sought thee sorrowing.* The Fondness of the Mother could hardly bear his least Absence from her, and her tender Affection would scarce endure him out of her sight: which Jesus perceiving, made him by degrees to wean her from him, sometimes withdrawing a while from her, as he did here at *Jerusalem*; and when she declar'd the Care and Grief she sustain'd in seeking him, he with some small Resentment, mix'd with abundance of Affection and Duty, reply'd, *How is it that ye sought me, wist ye not that I must be about my Father's Business?* which is as if he had said, Having heard so many Witnesses of me, by the Angels and others, that I came from God, ought you not to know that I must do the Work of him that sent me? The Temple being my Father's House, is my proper Home, and there must I attend the Business that he hath set me. The same he told his Disciples elsewhere, saying, *I must work the Works of my Father that sent me;* *John* 9. 4.

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That as the Father gave me Commandment, so I do; John 14. 31. And John 18. For this cause came I into the World, to bear witness to the Truth: which he here began to do in the Temple among the Doctors, and that by his Father's special Order and Appointment.

Now this Reply of his to his Parents was as much above their Understanding, as it was beside their Expectation: They knew well enough whom he meant by the Father, but did not so well understand the Work and Business he discours'd of; the great Mysteries and Counsels of God about Man's Redemption, being not yet reveal'd to them, nor those things in particular which our Lord was to do and suffer to that end. So the Evangelist here tells us, that *they understood not the Saying which he spake unto them, tho he afterward expounded it unto them, and let them know all, as occasion requir'd: Of which the holy Mother took so great Notice, that 'tis said, She kept all these and other his Sayings in her Heart.* She let none of his Words to slip out of her Mind, or to fall to the Ground, but carefully weigh'd and treasur'd them up in her Heart. So the Evangelists often tell us, that *Mary ponder'd and consider'd these things, digested them by Silence and deep Meditation, and laid them up in her Heart; when her Sister Martha was cumber'd about many worldly and unnecessary Matters, Mary chose the better Part, that should never be taken from her:* She minded the one thing necessary; and tho she had the Honour to be the Mother of our Lord, yet was she more blessed by receiving his Word into her Heart, than by conceiving his Body in her Womb.

And now *Joseph and Mary* having done what they went for at *Jerusalem*, they with their Son went down to *Galilee*, and came to their own City *Nazareth*; where we read but little of him, till he enter'd upon the publick Exercise of his prophetick Office: only *St. Luke* here tells us, that *he was subject to his Parents, and that he increas'd in Wisdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.*

As for his Subjection to his Parents, he was highly dutiful and obedient to them in all things, save only in those, in which he ow'd a greater Duty to a higher Parent, even his Father in Heaven. And tho he did something without the leave of his Parents, in staying behind them in the Temple; yet being sent there by God, to prepare him for his Office, to whom Obedience is due before any earthly Parents, it could be no Act of Disobedience to his Mother, but

but of Duty to his Heavenly Father; but in all other things, that did not interfere with the Will of God, or the Design of his Coming, he liv'd in perfect Obedience to them.

As for his *increasing in Wisdom and Stature, and in favour with God and Man*, we must note, that Christ, in his human Nature, consisted of a Soul and Body as we do, and that he grew up and improv'd in both, in like manner, with us; in his Soul he increas'd in Wisdom, in his Body in Stature, and in both in Favour with God and Man. His Increase in Wisdom, was his Improvement in the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit; so we read in the 40th Verse of this Chapter, that *the Child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit, filled with Wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon him*: where the Child's growing, signifies his increasing in Stature of Body; his waxing strong in Spirit, is interpreted by his being fill'd with Wisdom; and the Grace of God being upon him, implies his being in favour with God and Man. So was it said of *Samuel* before him, that *the Child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with Men*; 1 Sam. 2. 26.

Moreover, we read elsewhere, that during his Abode in *Nazareth*, he assisted his reputed Father *Joseph* in his Trade and manual Employment, to leave behind him an Example of Industry and Diligence in an honest Calling or Occupation.

Besides, St. *Luke* tells us, that being grown up, he frequented the Synagogues of the *Jews* every Sabbath-Day: *Luke 4. 16. When he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up, as his Custom was, he went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath-Day, and stood up for to read.* Upon which words a very learned Author tells us, that it was his constant Custom to go with his Parents to the publick Synagogue of *Nazareth*, as his Parish-Church, every Sabbath-Day; where he sometimes read himself, and withal join'd with the Congregation, as a Member of it, in the other Parts of Divine Service; adding, that he punctually observ'd all the Rites and Ceremonies of the Synagogue-Worship, yea tho the People of *Nazareth* were none of the best, as appears by that proverbial Speech, *Can any Good come out of Nazareth?* yet he made no Separation, upon the vain Pretences of greater Purity, and more spiritual Worship, but continu'd a Member in constant Communion with them, during his Stay there. By which our Saviour hath cut off
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all Pretences to Separation, to which he never gave the least Countenance either by his Doctrine or Example, but ever sharply condemn'd and reprehended them in both.

This is briefly the Sum and Substance of the Gospel for this Day, from which we may learn some useful and necessary Lessons. As,

1st, From *Joseph* and *Mary's* punctual observing the Feast of the Passover, and their yearly repairing with their Child to *Jerusalem* to that end, we may learn diligently to attend the Seasons of God's Holy Word and Sacraments, and not to forsake the assembling our selves together at the times appointed for them, as the manner of some is. We see what great Pains these devout Persons took in long and frequent Journeys to serve God, according to his Command; and shall we think it much to go almost next door to pay our Duty and Homage to our Maker in his own House? What greater or better Patterns can we have to follow in this matter, than those of the Son of God, and his religious Parents? And if they would not neglect the Times, Places, and Manner of God's Worship, which he commanded them; how inexcusable shall we be, who pretend to love and imitate them, if we neglect or contemn either? Under the Law, if any refus'd to observe the Feast of the Passover, that Soul was to be cut off from among the People, *Exod. 12. 19.* of how much sorer Punishment must they be thought worthy, who neglect a much better Feast under the Gospel? The Passover was but a Shadow or Figure of the Lord's Supper; and the Paschal Lamb, slain in the former, was but a Type of the Lamb of God slain in the latter, to take away the Sins of the World. And if they escap'd not, who refus'd to observe *Moses's* Law, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? The Son of God declares himself to be the *living Bread*, that came down from Heaven, and can alone feed our Souls to eternal Life; his *Flesh is Meat indeed, and his Blood is Drink indeed*, and both infinitely excel the Manna, and all the other Provisions which *Moses* gave to the *Israelites*: and therefore to withdraw from this sacred Feast, is not only an Indignity offer'd to our Saviour, but a great Injury to our own Souls, by withholding from them their proper Food; which is a Matter fit to be consider'd and amended by all wilful Contemners of God's Holy Word and Sacraments.

2^{ly}, From

2^{ly}, From this Holy Child's leaving his Parents to be about his Father's Business, we may learn to leave Father and Mother, to do the Will of our Heavenly Father. Hereby he hath taught us, how little any Relations of Kindred are to be regarded, when they prove Letts or Hindrances to true Piety and the Service of God; and of such Disengagement from Parents, he after gave many other Instances upon several Occasions. If our nearest Relations would either obstruct us in our Duty, or encourage us in any Vice or Immorality, they therein forfeit their Authority, and lose all Right to our Obedience in such Matters; and therefore our Saviour told his Disciples, that *he that loveth Father and Mother more than him, is not worthy of him*: yea, we are commanded rather to hate Father and Mother, than listen to their Advice, when their Commands happen to clash and interfere with our Duty to our Maker. This he taught us by his own Example, and this all his Precepts oblige us to.

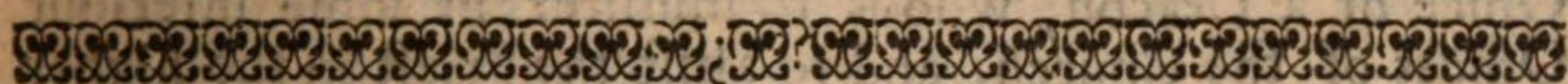
3^{ly}, From Christ's being subject to and observant of his Parents in all other things, Children may learn to be dutiful and obedient to their Parents in every thing, that is not contrary to the Will and Commands of God. This God and Nature teaches them, next to their heavenly Father, to be subject to them, from whom they receive their Being; and in all things, wherein he hath not interpos'd to the contrary, to be directed by them: neither will any vain Pretences of Sinfulness or Sanctity prove a sufficient Plea or Excuse for their Disobedience.

4^{ly}, From the Son of God's increasing in Wisdom and Stature, we may learn the Truth of his Humanity, that he grew up by the same degrees both in Body and Mind, as we do: He was fed by the same Nourishment of Meat and Drink, as we are; he improv'd in Knowledg and Experience by the same Means and Measures of Education, and arriv'd at Strength and Stature of Body by the same Steps as we do; which shew'd him to be truly Man, as we are: which is to be believ'd against a sort of Hereticks, who affirm'd him to have assum'd only a Body of Air, in which he appear'd for a while, and then vanish'd away.

Lastly, From his increasing in favour with God and Man, we may learn how to attain to the same; he did it by his Obedience and Submission to the Will of God, and by Acts of Prudence, Meekness, and Charity towards Men, which made him highly pleasing and belov'd of both. And

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we too, by doing things acceptable to God and Men, that is, by observing our Duty to God, and shewing Mercy, and Kindness, and Good-will towards Men, shall likewise find the same. To this purpose *Solomon* advises, *Let not Mercy and Truth forsake thee, but bind them about thy Neck, and write them upon the Table of thine Heart; so shalt thou find Favour and good Understanding in the sight of God and Men: Prov. 3. 3, 4.* The Primitive Christians are said, by praising God in the Temple, to find favour among Men; *Acts 2. 47.* And *St. Paul* assures us, that he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approv'd of Men: *Rom. 14. 18.* By all which we see how to attain to the Benefit and Comfort of this Life, and to be made eternally happy in the next; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXV.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Rom. xii. 6 ——— 16.

Having then Gifts, differing according to the Grace given unto us; whether Prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministering; or he that teacheth, on Teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity; he that ruleth, with Diligence, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God, who doth govern all things in Heaven and Earth, mercifully to hear the Supplications of his People, and to grant them his Peace all the Days of their Life.

The Epistle begins where that for the foregoing Sunday ended; in the close of which, the Apostle makes a Comparison between the mystical Body of Christ's Church, and the Body natural: in which, as there are many Members, and all the Members have not the same Office; so we be-
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ing many, are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another. And then follow these words, *Having then Gifts, differing according to the measure of Grace given to us, whether Prophecy, &c.* Where we may observe,

1st, The different Offices and Functions, wherein Christ hath set the several Members of his Church, according to the different Measures of Grace and Favour given to them; as prophesying, ministring, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and the like. As for *prophesying*, that is generally taken, in the Old Testament, for foretelling future Events; God Almighty, for sundry Reasons, endowing the Prophets with a power of foretelling things to come. In the New Testament it is generally taken for expounding the Holy Scriptures, as might be shew'd in sundry Places of it. As for *Ministring*, that is frequently taken for the Office of a Deacon, who is to minister in some inferiour Offices of the Church, and to assist the Priest in the higher Ministrations. As for *Teaching*, that refers to the instructing the People in the knowledg of Divine Truths, and relates chiefly to the Office of a Catechist, who is to teach Children and Youth the Principles of Religion. As for *Exhorting*, that properly belongs to the Office of the Priest, who is to build upon the foregoing Foundation, and to press upon the People the great Duties of Religion, by way of Doctrine and Exhortation. As for *Giving*, that relates to all the good Offices of Humanity and Charity. As for *Ruling*, that refers to the Office of the Bishop and the superiour Pastors of the Church, who are to set things in order in the House of God, and to oversee and rule the Flock of Christ. These are the several Offices and Functions here mention'd by the Apostle; by which we see that the Members of Christ's Body, as well as the Members of the Natural Body, have not all the same Office, but have each their several Stations and Employments: And therefore the Apostle asks the Question, *Are all Apostles? Are all Prophets? Are all Teachers? Do all speak with Tongues? Do all interpret?* No, saith he, he gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors, and some Teachers, for the edifying the Body of Christ: 1 Cor. 12. 28, 29. Eph. 4. 11.

2ly, We may observe, that as God hath plac'd Men in different Offices and Functions, so hath he given *different Gifts, and several Measures* of Grace for the Discharge of them. So the same Apostle tells us, in that forecited Chapter,

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Chapter, *There are Diversities of Gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are Differences of Administration, but the same Lord; for to one is given the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit; to another Faith, to another the Gift of Prophecy, to another the discerning of Spirits, to another divers kinds of Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues: but all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will. 1 Cor. 12. 4, 5, and following Verses. This is the having Gifts, differing according to the Grace given to us.*

3ly, We may observe farther the Manner how these Gifts are to be us'd and exercis'd, and that is, with all Fidelity and Diligence, to the promoting the Glory of God, and the Good of his Church and People; for *the Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal, 1 Cor. 12. 7.* And we are here bid faithfully to discharge our Office, by a due exercise of the Gifts given us to that end. He that *prophecieth*, or expoundeth the Holy Scriptures, must do it *according to the Analogy or Proportion of Faith*, that is, according to the Measure or Rule of Faith, summ'd up in the Apostles Creed, without adding to, or taking from it.

He that *ministreth*, or is call'd to the Office of a Deacon, or some lower Services in the Church, let him *wait on his ministring*, and diligently perform what he is set about.

He that *teacheth*, either as a Tutor or Catechist, to instil into any the Principles of Religion, must faithfully discharge his Duty therein.

He that *exhorteth*, or is call'd to the Office of a Priest or Pastor, must carefully attend to Exhortation, and feed the Flock of Christ with sound Doctrine, over which he is made an Overseer.

He that *giveth*, or is qualify'd for a Benefactor, must do it with Simplicity, that is, without any kind of Vanity or Ostentation.

He that *ruleth*, or is call'd to the Office of a Bishop or Governour in the Church, must *do it with Diligence*; not as being Lords over God's Heritage, but as Examples to the Flock, as those that watch for their Souls.

Lastly, He that *sheweth Mercy*, must *do it with Cheerfulness*, for God loveth a cheerful Giver.

Thus as there are divers Offices and Functions among Christians, so are there divers Gifts and Abilities bestow'd upon them for the doing their several Duties in each; all

which are to be discharg'd by them with the utmost Diligence and Fidelity.

Now to this end the Apostle, in the following part of the Epistle for this Day, recommends several Graces and Vertues, that will very much help towards the faithful Discharge of these Offices: for our Gifts must be attended and sanctified with Grace, before they can answer or promote the End for which they were given.

And the prime and principal Grace here recommended for that purpose, is Love, both to God, our Neighbour, and our selves; for that will make all parts of our Duty to each easy and delightfom to us. He that is mov'd in his Duty by the Wheels of Love, will move nimbly and chearfully in it: but then this *Love must be without Dissimulation*; for so the Apostle's Advice is, Verse 9. *Let Love be without Dissimulation*: that is, it must be a true and sincere Affection, not barely in Shew and Pretence, but in Truth and Reality. Our Love to God must be rooted in the Heart, and issue from thence in Fruits of Righteousness and new Obedience, that *we may be Holy and without Blame before him in Love*, Ephes. 1. 4. Our Love to one another must be unfeigned, not from the Tongue or the Lips outward, like Judas, who betray'd his Master with a Kiss; or the Jews, who complimented him with, *Hail Master!* when they were about to crucify him: and much like that, is the saying, Your humble Servant, by such, who are so far from serving, that at the same time they are studying to do the greatest Mischief: and too many such there are, who outwardly pretend great Friendship, and inwardly prove the greatest Enemies. This is the height of Dissimulation, and renders such Persons at last odious in the sight of God and Men. St. John therefore wills all good Christians, to *love not in Word and in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth*, 1 John 3. 18. to cherish a true, hearty and unfeigned Affection in our Breast to one another, and to make it appear in Acts of real Kindness and Good-Will. Which is the same Advice that the Apostle here gives us, *Let Love be without Dissimulation*. To which end he adds in the same Verse, *Abhor that which is Evil, cleave to that which is Good*; i. e. keep at as great a distance as you can from all sorts of Evil, which imbitters Mens Minds, and sours their Spirits against each other; but especially flee and abhor Hypocrisy, which is the Bane of all true Love, and engenders nothing but Strife and Hatred. To maintain that sincere Love that promotes

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Promotes all the Duties of your Calling, learn to detest all deceitful and impious Practices, which tend to create Breaches and Discord; and *cleave to that which is good*: stick to Vertue and all honest and just Courses, and that will help to promote Peace, and lead to the Practice of all those Duties that belong to the Station wherein God hath set you. In order to this, the Apostle exhorts in the next Verse,

To be kindly affection'd one to another in Brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another, that is, to be full of Affection and Kindness to each other; doing all things that may be grateful and beneficial, but nothing that may be hurtful or troublesom to any other; not straining up matters to the height and rigour of Action, which may be sometimes a great Injury and Injustice, but making all the Abatements which Equity and Justice, considering all Circumstances, may reasonably allow. This is the *Moderation*, which the Apostle would have to *be made known unto all Men*; which as it proceeds from Brotherly-Love, so is it the best Expedient to preserve and continue it: especially if we add what the Apostle here subjoins to it, *viz. In Honour preferring one another*. The under-valuing and detracting from any one's just Worth, naturally stirs up Strife, and provokes to some return or reparation; and this is commonly the Fault of conceited Persons of a mean Rise, and little Education: none, we say, are so bold as blind Buzzards; and they who have a got a little smattering, think they know all things, when perhaps they know nothing as they ought to know. And this vainly puffs them up, and makes them prefer themselves before others, that are in truth far above them: whereas the Apostle's Advice here is, not to disparage but to prefer one another, and to esteem others better than themselves; and so indeed the best and wisest Men do, and 'tis only the Bubbles and Bladders, that swell and grow big upon nothing.

St. Paul here would have Men emulous in honouring one another, and striving who should do most Service to each other this way; and would by no means have them detract from the Honour of another, to derive it upon themselves; for this is not to prefer, but to degrade one another, and to lessen others to magnify themselves: which is inconsistent with, and repugnant to all the Duties they owe to one another. Moreover, for the better discharge of the Offices and Functions, wherein God hath placed us, the Apostle directs in the next Verse,

To be *not slothful in Business, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*, Ver. 4. For the better understanding whereof, we must note, that all Men are or ought to be engag'd in some particular Calling, Profession, or Trade, relating to the Affairs of this Life; and likewise in the general Calling and Profession of Christians, in relation to the World to come. The Duty of the former is to be not slothful, but diligent and industrious in the Business belonging to our particular Calling; the Duty of the latter is, Zeal and Fervency in the Worship of God: Both which will conduce much to our Prosperity in this World, and our Happiness in the next; and to discharge our Duty as Men, and as Christians, we are to be careful and faithful in both.

As for our particular Calling as Men, we are to be not slothful, but diligent and industrious in the Business of that; for God hath given Gifts and Abilities both of Body and Mind to that purpose, of which he expects an Account and Improvement: and they who abandon themselves to Idleness, and a lazy Neglect of these Talents, fall into Want and Beggary here, and will be doom'd with the slothful and unprofitable Servant, to eternal Darkness hereafter.

As for our general Calling as Christians, we are to be zealous and constant therein, not shrinking from God's Service, nor growing lukewarm or hypocritical in his Worship, but keeping in a constant Flame and Fervency of Spirit in his Service.

But here I cannot omit another Translation of these Words; some instead of *δουλεύοντες κυρίῳ*, serving the Lord, read *δουλεύοντες καιρῷ*, serving the Times: willing Christians to double their Diligence and Devotion from the Badness of the Times, which was then a Season of great Corruption by the Hereticks, and of great Persecution by the Jews; and we are thereby taught to be so far Time-servers, as to serve our selves by it, by making a right Use of the Seasons, and preserving our selves from the Evil and Danger of the Times. To which end, the Apostle in the

Next Verse prescribes three excellent and useful Vertues; to wit, *Rejoicing in Hope, Patience in Tribulation, and continuing instant in Prayer*, Ver. 12. Which things will guard us against the Difficulties of all Times, and keep us blameless to the Coming of our Lord.

As for *rejoicing in Hope*, that gives us to understand, that well-grounded Hope is a firm Foundation of Joy; for which reason 'tis stil'd *an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and stedfast*;

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steadfast; that keeps it from fluctuating in Uncertainties, and fixes it upon God, the immovable Center of all Felicity. *Abraham believed in Hope even against Hope*, looking for a Saviour to spring from his Loins, even when he was bid to sacrifice his Hopes in offering up his Son, from whom he was to come. *Abraham saw my Day* (saith Christ) *and was glad*; he rejoic'd in a remote and obscure View of that Salvation which we have liv'd to see accomplish'd; and therefore we may rejoice much more in hope of that future Blessedness which he hath procur'd for, and promis'd to us. And that will teach us

The next Lesson, *viz.* to be *patient in Tribulation*; for when our Hearts are fix'd in a lively Hope of a never-fading Inheritance, reserv'd in Heaven for us, we shall easily bear those light and short Afflictions that lead to and prepare us for it; which made the Apostles and Primitive Christians, rather to rejoice than faint under any Tribulations: and so shall we too, if we look beyond them, to that Crown of Glory, which is set at the end of our Race; especially if, in the

Next place, we *continue instant in Prayer*; not giving off our Suit upon the first Denial, but continuing and increasing our importunity; which if not presently, will in the end surely prevail: for God never turns away earnest and importunate Suiters.

Moreover, to render the better account of the Gifts and Talents committed to us, the Apostle in the next Verse recommends two Duties more; namely, *Distributing to the Necessity of Saints, and being given to Hospitality*, Ver. 13. The one respects the Poor, the other Strangers.

As for the Poor, the Wise Man tells us, that he that giveth to them, lendeth to the Lord, who will repay it with great Advantage: They who by any unavoidable Accident, or by Sickness and the Infirmities of Age, are reduc'd to Want and Necessity, are, by the Providence of God, cast upon our Charity; and God hath charg'd the Substance given to others, with the Relief of their Necessities.

As for Strangers, we are bid *not to be forgetful to entertain them, for some have thereby entertained Angels unawares*; Heb. 13. 2. The Angels there refer'd to, were those that were entertain'd by *Abraham* and *Lot*, of whom we read in the eighteenth and nineteenth Chapters of *Genesis*; who instead of being a Burden, brought a Blessing to the Houses where they came: and we by receiving and lodging of Strangers, may find the same or like Blessings here, or a much greater Blessedness hereafter.

Furthermore, we are taught in the next Verse, how to demean our selves towards Enemies, in these words; *Bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not*, Ver. 13. This Lesson Christ himself taught his Disciples, *Luke 6.27,28. I say unto you, Love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you.* And his Apostles press'd the same as a peculiar Precept and Duty of Christianity. The Law of *Moses* allow'd, in many cases, some sort of Retaliation and Revenge; as an Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth, and the like; but Christ's Religion allows none: for whereas 'twas said by them of old, Love your Friends, and hate your Enemies; Christ oppos'd his saying to the contrary, *But I say unto you, love your Enemies*; and the Apostle here to the same purpose, *Bless and curse not*. Yea, our Apostle would have Christians to be so far from cursing any, that he exhorts them, in the next Verse, to sympathize and to bear a part in the Joys and Sorrows of one another; saying, Verse 15. *Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep*; that is, be affected with the Good or Evil that befalls each other: If God hath blest thy Neighbour with any signal and remarkable Blessing, instead of envying or railing at him, go and congratulate the Blessing, join with him in blessing God for it, and rejoice in the Comfort that may accrue to him by it. So likewise on the other hand, if any Cross, Trouble or Affliction hath befallen him, go and condole with him; lighten the Burden of his Affliction, and bear a part with him: so shall we double the Joys, and lessen the Sorrows of one another. And therefore the Apostle wills us to *have the same Mind one towards another*; that is, to have the like tender Affection or Compassion towards others as we bear to our selves; and to have the same feeling of others Condition, as we should if it were our own.

Finally, To put an end to all Differences and Contentions, which owe their Rise to Pride and height of Spirit, the Apostle closes up the Epistle with this Caution; *Mind not high things, but condescend to Men of low Estate*: that is, Let not thy Mind swell above the Circumstances of thy Condition, but keep it humble and low; do not aspire after Greatness, nor court the Grandeur of the World, which is little better than courting Misery and Trouble; for tho it may shew a fair and gaudy out-side, there is little within but Care and Trouble. *Seekest thou great things for*

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for thy self? (saith the Prophet) seek them not; but rather let great things seek thee than thou them, Jer. 45. 5. Shew Meekness and Condescension to Men of low Estate, and stoop to the meanest to do them Good; and that is the way to rise in the Opinion of God and Men.

Thus we see the several Capacities and Relations we stand in to each other, and likewise the several Offices and Functions wherein God hath set us; together with the several Gifts and Graces granted for the faithful discharge of them. It remains only, that we observe and practise these Rules, which will bring Comfort to us in this World, and Happiness in the next. Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXVI.

The GOSPEL for the second Sunday after
the Epiphany.

St. John ii. 1—12.

And the third Day there was a Marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was call'd and his Disciples, to the Marriage. And when they wanted Wine, the Mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no Wine, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives an account of the first Miracle wrought by our Blessed Saviour, after he enter'd upon his Office, together with the Time, Place, Occasion, and other Circumstances of it. Some indeed think, that he did other Miracles privately before, with relation to the Necessities of his Family, and the Affairs of his Trade; but that this here related, was the first publick Miracle that he did.

As for the time of doing it, the Text tells us, 'twas on the *Third Day*, to be reckon'd from his calling his Disciples, and his Discourses with them, of which we read in the close of the foregoing Chapter; tho some would have it reckon'd from his Baptism, which he receiv'd from St. John;

others, from his return from the Wilderness, and the Combat he had with the Devil there. But

However that be, 'tis said there was at that time a *Marriage*, suppos'd to be of some of our Saviour's Relations; the Company consisting mostly of his Neighbours and Kinsfolks.

The Place where it was celebrated, was in *Cana of Galilee*, a Place memorable for many other Actions of our Saviour; call'd *Cana of Galilee*, to distinguish it from another Place of the same Name, which was in the Tribe of *Ashur*, call'd *Cana the Great*, lying between *Tyre* and *Sidon*, as we read, *Joshua* 19. 28, 29.

The Persons invited to this Wedding, were *the Mother of our Lord*; and *Jesus also and his Disciples*, were called to *the Marriage*: where they vouchsafed to come, to adorn and beautify that holy State with their Presence, and disdain'd not to be Guests at the Marriage-Feasts; at which they demean'd themselves with a Mirth and Chearfulness suitable to so joyful a Solemnity. The Wise Man tells us, *that there is a time for all things, a time to be merry, and a time to be sad; a time to laugh, and a time to mourn.* And as it would be improper to be merry at a Funeral, so would it be no less unseasonable to be sad at a Wedding. And therefore our Blessed Saviour, who best knew the Times and Seasons for all things, refus'd not the Civil Society, or the innocent Mirth and Chearfulness of such Occasions. Indeed the sour and morose *Pharisees* blamed this freedom of our Saviour, and wonder'd that he who pretended to the Character of the *Messias* and the Son of God, should shew himself so familiar, and converse so freely with Sinners. When he accepted an invitation from *St. Matthew*, and dined with him, they objected to his Disciples, *Why eateth and drinketh your Master with Publicans and Sinners?* tho he did it merely to reform and do them good. When he went to *Zaccheus's* House, another Publican, though he brought Salvation with him, yet these sullen Hypocrites mutter'd against him; saying, *This Man receiveth Sinners, and eateth with them*, *Luke* 15. 2. And when the Son of Man came eating and drinking on such Occasions, they said, *Behold a Man gluttonous and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; *Matth.* 11. 19. But Christ, who was marvellously free, obliging, and conversable with Mankind, rather rebuk'd than reply'd to such Cavils; he would not have his Religion disparag'd by any Opinion of Sourness or Melancholy, and therefore gave no Example of any
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starcht, fullen, or morose Distance, but shew'd all innocent Compliance, Chearfulness and Condescension; and would have his Disciples to learn of him to be meek and lowly in Heart, and to do the same.

Such doubtless was his Carriage at this Marriage-Feast; where we read, that they drank up all the Wine, *and when they wanted Wine, the Mother of Jesus said unto him, they have no Wine.* The mentioning whereof, was not, we may be sure, to give any encouragement to Excess, but to give an Occasion of shewing a Miracle in the presence of all that were there, in supplying the want of it: and perhaps the private Instances which she had before seen of his Divine Power, mov'd her to mention it in this present Necessity.

But what was her Son's Answer to her in this Case? Why, a strange one at the first hearing, and such as seem'd rather to check, than to encourage the Motion; for *Jesus said unto her, Woman what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.* Where he does not call her by the Name of Mother, but Woman: as in another Case, when the Disciples spake of his Mother, he ask'd, *Who is my Mother?* Mat. 12.48. not that he was either ignorant of, or disown'd his Mother, for he said elsewhere, *Woman, behold thy Son.* John 9.26. But his Design in these and the like words was, to let her know that she, tho his earthly Parent, was not to interpose in Matters of his Office, to which he was sent by his heavenly Father; in which things he signifies, that he had nothing to do with her. And to make her desist from any meddling therein, he farther tells her, that *his Hour was not yet come.* Which must not be understood so in general, that the time of his doing any Miracles was not yet come, for that was already commenc'd at his Baptism, when the Holy Ghost came down upon him to that end; but that the time of doing that Miracle was not yet seasonable: at least, that it was not seasonable to do it in that publick manner, which she would have it, to shew forth his Power unto all. So Christ expresses himself in a like case, *John 7. 6. My time is not yet come;* meaning, that 'twas not yet seasonable or fit to do many things so publickly as they expected: intimating withal his purpose of doing them more privately at present, and more publickly when a fit season comes. Accordingly his Mother guessing at his meaning of doing the thing, mov'd to him more privately, and in such a manner, as none should know it but the Servants: *She said unto the Servants, whatsoever he saith un-*

to you, do it. By which she will'd them, silently to observe his Motion, and to be obedient to him without any Noise, in doing whatever he should bid them.

And there were at that time in the House, where they were, *six Water-pots of Stone set there after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three Firkins a-piece*; that is, there were several Cisterns of a competent Bigness to hold Water for common Uses, and out of which they were wont to draw it, as occasion did require; and particularly for the several Purifications and Washings which were customary among the Jews. For St. Mark tells us, that *the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash oft, eat not, holding the Tradition of the Elders; and when they come from the Market, except they wash, they eat not: and many other things there be which they have receiv'd to hold, as the washing of Cups and Pots, of brazen Vessels and Tables.* Mark 7. 3, 4. For all which Uses they had Water still ready in those Cisterns.

Now Jesus seeing those Water-pots, commanded them to be filled up to the Brim; which being done, he by the invisible Influence of his Divine Power immediately turn'd the Water into Wine, and then said unto the Servants, *Draw out now, and bear it unto the Governour of the Feast*: that is, one that presided and order'd all things relating to it; to him they bare it. When the Ruler of the Feast had tasted the Water that was made Wine, and knew not whence it was, but the Servants which drew the Water knew; the Governour of the Feast call'd to the Bridegroom, and saith unto him, *Every Man at the beginning doth set forth good Wine, and when Men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good Wine until now.* By which words he recommended the Goodness and Richness of the Wine; for tho he was ignorant whence it came, or how it was made, none but the Servants being privy to that, yet he found something in it that was extraordinary, and far transcending all that they had before: which made him tell the Bridegroom, that he had done contrary to the usual Course of Feasting, which was to bring out the best and richest Wines at first, when the Palats of the Guests were free, and best able to judg of the Richness of them; but after they were well fill'd, and could not so well distinguish the Relish of them, then lower and common Wine would pass: whereas he had reserv'd the best and noblest Wine at last, and nothing that went before was worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with it.

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The Bridegroom marvel'd at this Discourse of the Governor, being as ignorant of the matter as he, neither of them knowing whence so great a Quantity of good Wine should come; whereupon they call'd in the Servants, and examin'd them concerning it, who related the Fact, and discover'd the whole Matter. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee*; that is, this was his first publick Miracle after he was baptiz'd of St. John, tho he might have done some private ones before in his own Family. His Inauguration, or first Entrance upon his Office, was here accidentally celebrated with a Feast; where, when Wine was wanting, he wrought a Miracle to supply it, to preserve the innocent Mirth and Joy of that Occasion. And the Marriage then solemniz'd signify'd that spiritual Marriage he was shortly to consummate with his Spouse the Church: for which reason he is often stil'd the *Bridegroom*, John 3. 29. John began his Office with fasting, like an Anchorit or Hermit; but Christ enter'd upon his with a Feast, that the Children of the Bride-chamber might rejoice with him; *Mat. 9. 14, 15*. And this Miracle was answerable; for thereby he changed John's Water and Penance into Wine and Joy in the Holy Ghost. And by this 'tis said in the close, that *he manifested his Glory, and his Disciples believ'd on him*. Where two blessed Effects are said to follow this Miracle:

The one, Christ's manifesting his Glory unto the People.

The other, the People's manifesting their Faith in him.

1st, Jesus is here said by this beginning of Miracles to manifest his Glory. He who before liv'd somewhat obscurely with his Parents at *Nazareth*, began now to be more publickly known in *Galilee*: where the Dignity of his Person, the Divinity of his Power, and the Glory of his Mission, were made manifest unto many; to his near Relations and Disciples in the first place, and after by them to all Mankind.

The Greatness and Glory of his Power was eminently seen in the superabundant Effects of his Miracles: for as in the Miracles of the Loaves and the Fishes, after the feeding of so vast a Multitude, there was more left, than was at first set before them; so in this Miracle of the Wine, after they had well drunk, and were satisfy'd, there remain'd a greater Plenty both for Quantity and Goodness, than there was when the Feast began: which argu'd the
infinite

infinite Power and Goodness of him, who thus liberally provided for them.

2dly, Another Effect of this and other Miracles was, that *his Disciples believ'd on him*. They saw and acknowledg'd a Divinity in him, for none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him. Should any pretend to an extraordinary Mission from God, as some others have done, and yet do nothing, but what ordinary Men may or can do, they may and ought to be taken for Impostors; yea, should any come with false and lying Wonders, done by sleight of Hand, or magical Arts, as the false Christs, and false Prophets did, we are warn'd to believe them not, and to go not after them. But true and real Miracles, that exceed all the Powers and Art of Nature, are a Sign and a Seal from Heaven; and he that brings a Commission seal'd with such unquestionable Miracles, as our Saviour plainly and manifestly did, may and ought to be receiv'd as one that comes from God: so the Disciples here did, and so have all their Followers in all Times and Ages ever since done, by believing on him.

This is briefly what is held forth to us, in the Gospel for this Day; from whence we may be instructed in the following Lessons.

1st, From Christ's Presence and Freedom at the Marriage-Feast, we may learn Affability and Friendliness of Conversation. 'Tis no part of our Saviour's Religion to be sour, morose, or cynical; for he himself was quite otherwise, humble, courteous, and condescending upon all Occasions; and both his Doctrine and Example teach us to be free, familiar and friendly towards all Men. *Nabal* for his Churlishness is stil'd one of the Sons of *Belial*, and his Carriage as well as Name betray'd his Folly; for so we read, *Nabal was his Name, and Folly was with him*. The *Pharisees* were rebuk'd by our Saviour, as well for their sullen and morose Distance from others, as for their Hypocrisy; both which commonly go together, and are the Effects of Pride, and a Contempt both of God and Men. We are indeed commanded to avoid the Vices, but not the Persons of Men; we are forbid to have any Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but not with the Workers; for that would hinder what follows, the reprovng and reforming of them. But Christ teaches us here a better Lesson, to be affable, friendly, and condescending to the Meanest: there was nothing crabbed or austere

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austere in him, but he ever shew'd himself of a sweet, benign and conversable Temper. And for any to say to others, *Stand off, come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou*, favours more of the Pride of a Pharisee, than the Humility of a good Christian.

2dly, From Christ's checking that unseasonable Motion of his Mother, with saying, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* we may be farther confirm'd in that Lesson, that no Indulgence or Indearments of Parents or Kindred should obstruct us in our Duty, or keep us from doing the Will of God: *Wist ye not* (saith he in another place) *that I must be about my Father's Business?* And here, *What have I to do with thee?* when she mov'd for a thing in a manner which he thought unfit. He left Father and Mother to do the Business for which he was sent; *In the Volume of the Book* (saith he) *it is written of me, I come to do thy Will, O God.* Accordingly, we read, that it was his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his heavenly Father, and no carnal Respects of earthly Parents could draw him from it: which made him say, *Whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother*; Mat. 12. 50. meaning, that he valued more the Children of God by Faith and Obedience, than they that were related to him by Nature and Blood; and that he prefer'd the teaching and conversing with such, before paying a Civility to those who in carnal Respects were nearest to him. And so should we too, when they would draw us to offend God, or hurt our Souls, by gratifying, pleasing, or profiting them.

3dly, From Christ's saying, that his *time was not yet come*, we may learn to know and observe the proper Times and Seasons of Actions; not that we are to pry into those Times and Seasons, which God hath kept secret to himself, as the Time of our Death, or the Day of Judgment; for in those and the like things, Christ told his Disciples, saying, 'tis not for you to know the Times and Seasons, which the Father hath reserv'd the Knowledg of to himself: but in things appertaining to us or our Duty, we are to observe and make choice of the fittest Times and Seasons of doing of them, as keeping to the Hours of Prayer, the Seasons of the Sacraments, and other proper Opportunities of dispatching any spiritual or temporal Matters. *Solomon* hath told us, that *every thing is beautiful in its season*, Eccles. 3. 11. A thing may be done well at one time, that may not

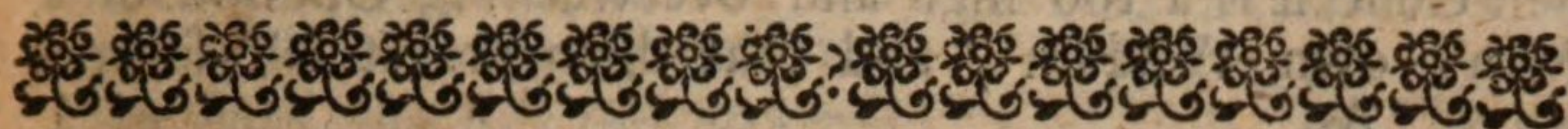
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at another : As *there is a season to everything, and a time to every Purpose under Heaven*, Eccles. 3. 1. so is it no small piece of Wisdom to know and nick those Seasons. *Distingue Tempora*, was a good piece of Advice, and may serve not only to solve many Difficulties, but wisely to perform many Duties ; which we are therefore carefully to watch and improve.

4thly, From Christ's manifesting his Glory by his Miracles, we may learn still to publish and set forth the same ; not that we can add any thing to, or take from his essential Glory, that is not in the power of any Creature : but all that the Scripture intends by the Expressions of *glorifying God, or doing things to his Glory*, is only the setting forth the Greatness of his Power, and the Excellence of that Glory, which is infinite, and always the same. And that is best done, when we testify in our own Minds, and labour to beget in others a due Reverence and Admiration of the Divine Majesty, and his adorable Perfections ; when the Sense of his infinite Power makes us to rely upon him, of his Justice to fear him, of his Mercy to love him : in a word, when we inwardly cherish those Passions and Affections, which are suitable to his Attributes, and outwardly perform those good Works by which he delights to be serv'd ; then do we in the best mannner we can manifest his Glory, and advance our own.

Lastly, From the Effect that this Miracle had upon the Disciples to make them believe on him, we may learn and labour for a firm and unshaken Faith in him ; taking him for the true promis'd Messiah, and believing the Doctrine reveal'd by him. Miracles are the strongest Seal that can be set to any Doctrine, for they evidently shew it to come from God, who alone does such Wonders : and therefore we may and ought stedfastly to adhere to the Truths deliver'd by him, and lay the whole stress of our Hopes of Salvation upon him.





DISCOURSE XXVII.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday after
Epiphany.

Rom. xii. 16, to the end.

Be not wise in your own Conceits. Recompense to no Man Evil for Evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all Men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men, &c.

THE Collect for this Day puts us in mind of the sad and calamitous Estate of this Life, and therefore prays Almighty God mercifully to look upon our Infirmities, and in all our Dangers and Necessities to stretch forth his right Hand to help and defend us.

The Epistle for the Day gives us many useful Rules to be observ'd by us in order to that end. Indeed this whole Chapter, of which the Epistle is a part, contains many excellent Precepts both divine and moral, to direct us in the whole Course of our Life; and therefore the Church hath wisely selected them, to be read in three several Portions, in the three following Sundays after the Epiphany; that having the Light, we may be taught how to walk in it. Of these Portions, the Epistle for this Day is the last, and is now to be explain'd.

It begins with a Caution against Pride and Revenge; *Be not wise in your own Conceits, and recompense to no Man Evil for Evil:* And continues with an Exhortation to several Graces and Vertues that may help to suppress and subdue both. I begin then with the

First Thing here caution'd against, and that is Pride, in these words; *Be not wise in your own Conceits.* Now this is what the Apostle before condemn'd, ver. 3. *Let no Man think more highly of himself than he ought to think.* So that Self-

Self-Conceit is a too high and overweening Opinion of a Man's own Wisdom ; and that discovers it self several ways. As,

1st, By being too confident of himself, and leaning too much to his own Understanding ; setting up his Judgment above theirs who are far superiour to him both in Parts and Place : this makes some to be wiser than their Teachers, and to controul their Governours, and stick pertinaciously to their own Ways and Opinions.

Again, Self-conceit discovers it self by not hearkning to the Advice and Counsel of their Betters, but taking it amiss that any should teach or advise them, who think they know enough already.

Moreover, Self-conceit is seen in Mens imposing their own private Fancies, Humours, and Customs upon others, as if none but they had Wit or Judgment enough to direct them in such matters. The proud Man would teach all, but learn of none, and suffer none to know or understand any thing, at least so fully as himself.

Again, Self-conceit discovers it self in a busy pragmatical meddling in other Mens matters, interposing in their Affairs without any Authority, and giving their Judgment before they are ask'd : If any thing be well done, 'twas done by their direction ; if it miscarry, 'twas because it was done without their Advice, or the Fool would not be rul'd. The proud Person puts his Sickle into every Man's Corn, hath an Oar in every Man's Boat ; monopolizing all Wisdom to himself, and scarce allowing enough of it to any to manage their own Affairs ; which is an Argument of great Pride and Folly, for they who are thus full of themselves, are commonly found the emptiest Persons, and big with nothing but Self-conceit.

Once more, Self-conceit discovers it self by judging and censuring of others, and charging them with Ignorance and Folly, for not doing as they would have them. This is too common a Fault with many, who sit in Judgment upon others, arraigning their Actions, and passing Sentence upon them without any Authority ; yea, against the Commands of God, who forbids them to judg their Brethren, asking who made them Judges, and threatening them with the same or greater Judgment than they pass upon others.

These, among many others, are the Signs and Properties of Self-Conceit, but the bad Effects of it are too many and great to be easily reckon'd ; for it hath a very bad influence
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both in Church and State, and creates great Disturbances in Neighbourhoods and private Conversation.

In the Church, Pride and Self-conceit hath done and still does unspeakable mischief. This hath made many Atheists, Hereticks, and Schismatics, to the great decay of Religion, and disturbance of the Church: for some Mens setting up their own Reason above Divine Revelation, and others preferring their private Wisdom before that of their Teachers, have run into great Errors and Divisions. Their being wise in their own Conceits, hath made them despise all publick Orders and Constitutions, and to disobey those whom God hath appointed both to rule and to teach them; which naturally leads to all manner of Confusion and Disorder, as our own sad Experience doth too plainly manifest. Again,

2dly, Self-conceit does no less harm in the State than in the Church; for when Men come once to think themselves wiser than their Governours, they soon shake off the Yoke, and do only what is right in their own eyes. Hence they come to *despise Dominions, and to speak evil of Dignities*, and grow refractory against Laws and Government: *A proud Heart (saith Solomon) stirreth up Strife*, Prov. 18. They that think too highly of themselves, will be disputing those Orders to which they ought to submit, and study to evade Laws, which they are oblig'd to obey. And of this too, our unhappy Age can afford us too many Instances. Again,

3dly, This Self-conceit occasions great Disturbances in Neighbourhoods and private Conversation; for this makes Men busy and pragmatical in other Mens matters, and instead of studying to be quiet, by doing their own business, puts Men upon meddling in others Affairs, which perhaps they understand not, and belong not to them: and thus, by taking too much upon them, they grow troublesome and uneasy to all that are about them. This likewise is too well known to need any proof.

And as the Sin of Self-conceit is great, so is the Danger of it no less; for it puts a bar to all Proficiency in Grace and Knowledg: for who will labour to know more, that thinks himself wise enough already? *Seest thou a Man wise in his own Conceit? (saith Solomon) there is more hopes of a Fool than of him*; Prov. 26. 12. For such a one is deaf to Instruction, and is so far from being sensible of his Defects,

that he takes his Errors for Truth, and his Dreams for Revelations.

But the great danger of this Evil is, that it sets God Almighty against them; for *God resisteth the Proud, and beholdeth them afar off.* He with-holds his Grace from them, and leaves them to the Vanity of their own Mind; which leads them into all Sin and Misery. Now,

1st, To cure this Evil, we are often to consider the Shortness and Scantiness of our own Knowledg: *He that thinketh he knoweth any thing (saith the Apostle) knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* The first step to all sound Knowledg, is to be sensible of our Ignorance, how few things we know, in comparison of those we know not; this will help to cure the Swelling of the Mind, and shrink it into mean Thoughts of it self, the best Preparative to true Wisdom.

2^{dly}, To cure this Self-conceit, let us look more and oftner upon those that excel, than those that come short of us; and that will help us to think soberly and modestly of our selves, and in honour to prefer one another.

3^{dly}, To cure this Vanity, consider the Defects and Imperfections even of the wisest Men: and then think with thy self, if they know but in part, how much less is it that falls within the Sphere of thy Knowledg; and if the Light within them be Darknes, how great is thy Darknes? And,

Lastly, To remove this Evil, often pray for the Grace of Humility; for we are naturally proud and vain, and nothing but the Grace of God can keep down the Risings of a proud Heart: and therefore to be rid of all Pride and Self-conceit, let us beg and labour to be cloth'd with Humility. This is the first Caution here given, *Be not wise in your own Conceit.*

The *Second* is against *Revenge*, in the next words; *Re-compense to no Man Evil for Evil.* 'Tis the mistake of too many, to think that they may safely return all the bad Usage they have receiv'd from others, and to do to them as they have been done to by them: so that if any have prov'd false, deceitful, abusive, or any way injurious to them, they may well enough return all this upon them, and do the same things to them again. These are the Thoughts and Practices of proud, envious, and malicious Persons; some whereof are gone so far, as to think, tho others have done them no evil, yet if they do not what they

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they would have them, they may study to do them all the mischief they can. These are no Principles of Religion, but the Suggestions of Satan, and the corrupt Insinuations of a deceitful Heart; for Religion consists intirely in doing good, and forbids all doing or returning of any evil. The golden Rule is, to do not as we are, but as we would be done by; so that what we would not have done to us, that we must take care not to do to others, tho perhaps they may have already done it unto us: for what we took to be evil when done to our selves, cannot become good by our doing it back again to others.

Indeed, *Moses's* Law allow'd of some kind of Retaliation in Cases of Wrong; but *Christ's* Law hath cut it quite off, and requires, in cases of Injuries, to be more ready to receive another, than to return the first: for we find him opposing his Sayings to what was said by them of old in these matters, to love Enemies, to do good to them that do evil to us, and rather to turn the other Cheek to the Smiter, than to return the first Blow: and his Example was according to his Precept; for *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judges righteously: 1 Pet. 2. 23.* When his Enemies buffeted him, spit in his face, and smote him with the hand, he return'd nothing but Prayers for them; saying, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* From which Precepts and Practice of our Saviour, the Apostle here directs to *recompense to no Man Evil for Evil*; of which he speaks more by and by. In the mean time, to learn the foregoing Lessons, he advises in the

Next words, to *provide things honest in the sight of all Men*, as the best means to suppress all Vanity and Elation of Mind, and to incline Men to do good rather than evil to one another: for he that takes care to do nothing but what is honest and honourable in the sight of all Men, will not disgrace his Christian Profession by acting any thing contrary to it. Now by *providing things honest in the sight of all Men*, may be meant, either the doing things only that are fit and fair, and agreeable to the Doctrine of the Gospel which they had receiv'd; in which sense, the Advice is the same with that given to the *Philippians*, Chap. 4. 8. *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things*

things are lovely and of good report ; if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things : that is, he would have them keep to things that are truly vertuous and commendable, that they might adorn their Profession, and render it lovely and amiable in the eyes of all Men.

Or else to *provide things honest in the sight of all Men*, is to do things decent in point of Diet and Apparel, as becomes our State and Condition, and to live suitable to the Place and Station wherein God hath set us, in all Sobriety, Meekness, and Contentedness. To which end, we are directed in the

Next Verse, *if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all Men* ; this being a good means to preserve the Ease, Quiet, and Comfort of Mankind : for he that studieth Peace and Quiet, will be easy to himself and others ; but he that delights in Brawls and Contentions, will be very troublesom to both. And therefore the Apostle wills us, *if it be possible, as much as lieth in us*, that is, as far as we lawfully may (*for id tantum possumus, quod jure possumus*) *to live peaceably with all Men*. Now to live peaceably with all Men, is to suffer them to live as easily and quietly as we may, and to promote as far as we can the Peace and Prosperity of all Men ; but still the Terms and Conditions of this Peace, is the keeping our Peace with God. We may not violate our Duty to him, to make or keep peace with any : for our Obligations to our Maker are superiour to any Engagements to our Neighbour ; and where these happen to clash or interfere, 'tis obvious which is to take place ; for as we are to obey God rather than Man, so are we to prefer our Peace with him before a Peace with all the World beside. Neither may we violate the Peace of our own Conscience, to gratify or please others ; for that is too near and dear a Concern, to be yielded up to the Will of any. But in all other things, wherein we offend not God, nor wound our own Conscience, we are to comply with others for the sake of Peace. In short, the Laws of God are the Rule and Standard of our Peace with him ; the Laws of Men, that are not contrary to the Will of God, are the Measure and Conditions of our Peace with Mankind ; and both are the Terms of Peace with our own Conscience : the observing of these Laws is the keeping of the Peace with each, but the breaking of them is the breach of the Peace with all.

Thus

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Thus we see the way to live peaceably with all Men; which is, to live in obedience to the Commands of God and our Superiours, and to observe the Laws that regulate the Intercourse and Societies of Mankind. And this shews how far it *lies in us* to live peaceably; and that is, not by having our own Will or Way in every thing, for that is the cause of most Contentions, and no Peace can be had that way: but 'tis by doing our Duty where we are bound by the Laws of God and Man, and where we are free to condescend and comply for the good of one another; this is as much as is possible, and as far as lies in us to promote Peace. 'Tis true, this may not always procure it; however, in doing this we have done our Duty, and gone so far as we may, and so may rest satisfy'd, leaving the Issue and Event of things to him that judges righteously.

'Tis Persons that are addicted too much to their own Interest, Humours, and Passions, that are eagerly bent upon their own Designs, and resolve to pursue them right or wrong; these are the Enemies of Peace, and Disturbers of the Quiet of the World. And therefore we must mortify those unruly Passions and Affections that are apt to breed and foment Quarrels, and labour for those pious and peaceable Dispositions that tend to reconcile us to God, our selves, and one another; and that will help us to live peaceably with all Men. The better to promote which,

The Apostle in the next Verse renews his former Caution against Revenge; ushering it in with a kind and loving Compellation, saying, *Dearly Beloved, avenge not your selves*: that is, if you will live peaceably, you must lay aside all thoughts of returning any Evil, and not harbour the least Desire of avenging your selves; for that keeps the Wound still raw, and instead of closing up, makes it fester and rankle, and fills the Mind with Malignity and Thoughts of Mischief. And therefore he gives a strict Caution, *See that no Man render Evil for Evil, but ever follow that which is good, among your selves and to all Men*; 1 Thess. 5. 15. And St. Peter to the same purpose; *Not rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing, but contrariwise Blessing; knowing that ye are hereunto call'd, that ye may inherit a Blessing.* 1 Pet. 3. 9. Where he would not have Christians in the least degree to act or meditate Revenge against any that had been most injurious, but rather to bless and curse not; which is the best way to receive a Blessing from God.

Now to cure this revengeful Humour, our Apostle adds, in the next words, *But rather give place unto Wrath.* Where by giving place unto Wrath, we must not understand the giving way to our Passions, or indulging our Anger; for that will make them headstrong, and hurry Men into all the ways of Revenge: to give place to Wrath in that sense, is elsewhere said to be *giving place to the Devil*, Eph. 4. 27. But to give place unto Wrath here, is to give time to consider; not to be rashly or hastily mov'd, but to allow some space for Deliberation, to cool the Fervours of the Mind, and allay the Heats of Rage and Revenge. To which end, the Apostle subjoins a farther Motive, taken from God Almighty's sole Right to Vengeance; saying, *It is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.* This is written in Deut. 32. 22, &c. where God himself declares, that it belongs to him to punish Offenders, and that he will do it in his due time. Now this he doth sometimes immediately by himself, by pouring down his Judgments upon them; in which cases, the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, 'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10. 31. But more frequently by his Officers, Judges, and Magistrates, whom he hath appointed to be the Instruments and Executioners of his Vengeance: for which reason the Apostle thus bespeaks Offenders; *If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain, but is the Minister of God, and a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth evil:* Rom. 13. 4. So that to go about to avenge our selves, is to take God's work out of his hands, and to invade his Prerogative; which is a high piece of Presumption, that will draw greater Evils upon our selves, than those which we seek to redress in others. From all which the Apostle infers, that 'twill be much better to leave Sinners to God's Punishment, than to go about to do it our selves; and for us, our wisest way at present is to conquer their Enmity by Kindness and good Offices. Therefore saith he, *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of fire upon his head.* If he who wishes thee ill, labour under any Want, do him all the good thou canst; if he want Meat, give him to eat; if he want Liquor, give him to drink; for that will melt the hardest Heart, and soften the most obdurate Spirit. Do then as Artificers do in melting Metals; if putting fire under them will not do, they pour live Coals upon the top, and by that

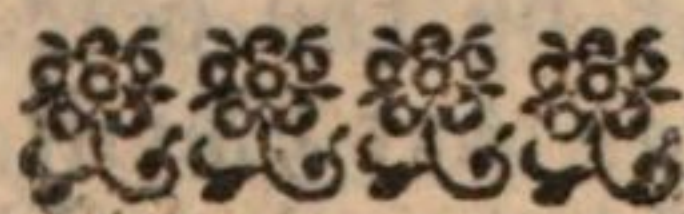
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that means melt the hardest Metals : if lesser Favours do not mollify, heap warmer Coals upon his head, and they may purge off the Enmity, and melt him into Love and Compliance.

This is the way here prescrib'd to us under the Injuries and Unkindnesses of Enemies ; which will prove a more effectual means of removing them, than the rougher methods of Revenge and Retaliation. After which, the Apostle closes the Chapter and the Epistle for this Day with that excellent piece of Advice, *Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.*

To be overcome of Evil, is to be so far exasperated by it, as to be mov'd to return and avenge it ; which shews it to have got the mastery of us, and put us beside our Patience. By this a Man is brought in bondage to his Passions, and becomes a Slave and Vassal to his vile Affections ; for of whom a Man is overcome, of him he is brought in bondage. And to be thus enslav'd by another's Wickedness, is the basest of all Servitudes ; which we should therefore scorn to be reduc'd to.

To overcome Evil with Good, is to conquer others Injuries by Acts of Mercy and Kindness, and to return nothing but Good for the Evil that is done us ; which shews that we keep the mastery of our selves, and cannot be shock'd by the Assaults of any Adversaries. Thus to overcome Evil with Good, is the noblest of all Victories : 'Tis the Glory of a Man (saith Solomon) to pass by an Offence ; and he that governs his Passions, is greater than he that ruleth a City. For these things, we cannot propound to our selves a higher and better Pattern than that of our Saviour, who overcame the greatest Evils with the greatest Good ; and in the end, for enduring the Cross, was rewarded with a Crown : and we too by patient Continuance in well-doing, shall receive Eternal Life ; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXVIII.

The GOSPEL for the Third Sunday after
the Epiphany.

St. Matthew viii. 1—13.

When he was come down from the Mountain, great Multitudes followed him: And behold there came a Leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day we have an Account of two Miracles done by our Blessed Saviour: the one upon a Leper, whom he heal'd by a Touch of his Hand; the other upon a Centurion's Servant, whom he cured by a Word of his Mouth. The Circumstances of both being here related, it will be requisite a little to unfold and explain them.

The first Verse of the Gospel acquaints us with the Circumstances of Time and Place whence he came, and when and where he did them, together with the Company that attended him: *When he was come down from the Mountain, great Multitudes followed him.* The Mountain here mention'd, from whence he came down, was the Mount of Olives, where our Saviour preach'd his famous Sermon, known by the Name of his Sermon on the Mount; an Account of which, St. Matthew gives us in the three foregoing Chapters. The Law was deliver'd by Moses on a Mountain, viz. Mount Sinai; as the Gospel was deliver'd by Christ on the Mount of Olives: and both for the same reason, that they might be the better seen and heard by the People. Here it was that Christ pronounc'd the eight Beatitudes, and publish'd the glad Tidings of the Gospel; call'd therefore, as Mount Gerizim sometimes was, *Mons Beatitudinum*, the Mount of Blessings. Here likewise he taught his Disciples many sublime and heavenly Truths, Truths that far excell'd not only the Precepts of the wisest Moralists,

Moralists, but the obscure Revelations of *Moses's* Law : all which he deliver'd with a Majesty suitable to the Dignity of his Person, and the Divinity of his Doctrine ; for he spake as one having Authority, and not as the *Scribes*.

When he had finish'd this Divine Discourse, he *came down from the Mountain*, attended with a great Resort of People ; for *great Multitudes followed him*, partly to hear more of his Doctrine, and partly to see his Miracles, and the wonderful Works that were done by him, and especially the Cures wrought by him.

But Christ was no sooner descended from this Mountain, but presently an Object of Mercy and Pity presented it self to him, to exercise his Power and Goodness upon him : for *behold, there came a Leper and worshipped him* ; that is, fell down at his feet, which is in Scripture often express'd by worshipping.

But how did he address to him ? Why, not with long pitiful Moans and Complaints of his Sickness, but saying only those few and hearty words ; *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*. In which words are express'd, first, a Sense of Christ's Power to help him, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean* ; and, secondly, a Sense of his own Weakness, that he could not do it himself : two excellent Qualifications of a Petitioner, which commonly incline him that is address'd to, to hear and answer the Petition. Accordingly therefore, Jesus seeing his Faith and humble Dependence upon him, presently *put forth his Hand and touched him* ; uttering withal these words, *I will, be thou clean*. And what follow'd upon his saying those words ? Why, he was *immediately made whole, and his Leprosy was cleansed*. The Suddenness as well as the Easiness of the Cure transported him with Joy ; but whilst he was breaking out into Praises and Thanksgiving, our Saviour gave him a double Charge :

1st, That he should not publish, or make any words of it ; ver. 3. *Jesus saith unto him, see thou tell no Man, but go thy way*.

2^{dly}, That he should go and shew himself unto the Priest, and offer the Gift that *Moses* commanded for a Testimony unto them. Both these parts of the Charge will require a little Explication.

As for the first part of the Charge, of not divulging or telling any of the Cure wrought upon him, we find him giving the same upon many other like Occasions : as *Mat. 9. 30.* when

when he had given Sight to two blind Men, *he straitly charg'd them, saying, See that no Man know it.* So likewise when he restor'd a Man's wither'd Hand, and heal'd others of many Distempers, he *charg'd them, that they should not make him known*; Mat. 12. 16.

But why did our Saviour so often command the concealing of his Miracles, which were so plain an Evidence of his Messiahship? Why, of this, different Reasons and Conjectures have been given. Some have thought that our Saviour did this, that Men might look more to his Doctrine than his Miracles; the one being more edifying, as tending more to the Welfare and Happiness of their Souls than the other, which related chiefly to the Health and Welfare of their Bodies. Others again tell us, that Miracles are more apt to raise Wonder and Admiration, than to beget any real Fruits of Vertue and Holiness: and therefore Christ would not have them too publicly spoken of, lest they should put Men upon desiring only temporal Favours of him; which would rather hinder than further his chief End in doing them, which was the eternal Salvation of their Souls. But that these were not the true Reasons hereof, is evident, because we find Christ often appealing to his Miracles for the Truth of his Doctrine, and willing Men to believe him, if not for his Words, yet for his Work's sake; which he would not do, if they were apt to produce no better Effects.

The true reason then of Christ's charging some Persons not to divulge the Miracles he had wrought upon them, was from his Knowledg of the Perverseness and Blasphemy of the *Pharisees* and others, who instead of being convinc'd by his Miracles, would take occasion thence to blaspheme, by ascribing them not to the Spirit of God, but to the Power of the Devil. Besides, he knew it might expose him to the Envy and Malice of the *Jews*, and so put him in danger of being cut off (without withdrawing or defending himself) before he had done the Work for which he was sent; which made him sometimes forbid the publishing of his Works, lest they come to the Ears of those that would make so ill use of them, which would be no better than casting Pearls before Swine.

But yet, at other times, Christ publicly own'd, and did his Miracles in the sight of many, when it might serve to better Purposes, and tend to the Benefit and Conviction of the World.

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2ly, The other Charge that Christ gave to this Leper, was, to go and shew himself to the Priest, and offer the Gift that Moses commanded as a Testimony unto them. And this he did, to shew his exact Conformity to the Jewish Church, of which he was a Member.

His shewing himself unto the Priest, was a thing commanded in the Levitical Law, as we read, Lev. 14. 2. *This is the Law of the Leper, in the day of his Cleansing he shall be brought unto the Priest; who, after the performing of some Rites for him, was to pronounce him clean, and to receive him into the Sanctuary and the Fellowship of the People.* In obedience to which Law, Christ bids this Leper, whom he had heal'd, to go and shew himself unto the Priest. Moreover, there was an Offering to be made unto the Priest, upon the Day of his cleansing, of which our Saviour also minds him, to give his Encouragement of paying the Rights and Respects due to the Priestly Office: *Go (saith he) and offer the Gift that Moses commanded; and this he did for a Testimony unto them*, that he oppos'd not the Law given by Moses, and that he was the true Messiah of whom Moses spake.

This is briefly the first Miracle here related, viz. that of the Leper, in all its Circumstances.

The Second is, that of the Centurion's Servant, in the following part of the Epistle; it begins ver. 5. *And when Jesus was enter'd into Capernaum, there came unto him a Centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my Servant lieth at home sick of the Palsy, grievously tormented.* Here we have the Time and Place of this Miracle also recorded, which was when he was enter'd into Capernaum, the chief City of Galilee; and that was a little after his coming down from the Mount.

The Person here applying to him was a Centurion, that is, a military Officer or Captain, having a hundred Soldiers under his Command. This Captain or Officer came to our Saviour, not for himself, but in the behalf of his Servant, who lay sick at his House, grievously tormented with a Palsy. Now this Centurion, tho a Roman and a Heathen, is suppos'd to incline much to be a Christian, being mightily affected both with the Doctrine and Miracles of our Saviour; which made him come to him, and earnestly beseech him to use his Power in healing his sick Servant, whom he dearly lov'd.

Jesus

Jesus willing to encourage his Faith, which he perceiv'd to increase and grow in him, saith unto him, *I will come and heal him.* The Centurion, either thinking his House not fit to receive so great a Guest, or believing that he could effect the Cure with a word's speaking, without troubling himself any farther, answer'd and said unto him, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou should'st come under my Roof, but speak the Word only, and my Servant shall be heal'd.* To shew how firmly he believ'd this, he amplifies it by the Authority he had over his Soldiers, which was far less than he had over all manner of Diseases; and yet, saith he, *If I say to this Man, Go, he presently goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my Servant, Do this, and he doth it:* how much more then can He whose Power is infinite, and can do whatever pleaseth him, easily rebuke and remove any Distemper? By which he shew'd his full Assurance, that one Word of his would easily cure him, without any more ado.

Christ seeing the Strength of his Faith, and hearing the Soundness of his Reasoning, *marvelled;* and shewing some sign of Admiration, *said to them that followed him, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel:* meaning, that this Roman Officer, who had heard little of a Messiah, and read less of the Prophecies concerning him, discover'd a better Knowledg and Belief in him, than many of the Jews, who had the Law and the Prophets, and heard both daily expounded to them.

Now this Centurion being a *Gentile* or Heathen, and yet shewing a greater Faith in Christ, than most of the Jews to whom he was sent, gave occasion to our Saviour in the next Verses to speak of the calling of the *Gentiles*, and the Rejection of the *Jews*.

The first is in these words, *And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven;* ver. 11. This is spoken of the *Gentiles*, and such as this Centurion was; who *tho Aliens to the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise,* and excluded by a *Partition-wall* from all the Privileges of the Temple, are yet to be receiv'd into Favour, adopted into Christ's Family, and to be made the Children of God. This was foretold by the Prophets of old, that the *Gentiles* should come in, and be made one Flock under the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls; and the time of the fulfilling that Pro-

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Prophecy was at hand, when great Multitudes from all parts of the World would come in and believe in Christ, and enjoy the Fruits of eternal Life, with *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful, and the other Patriarchs of the *Jewish* Nation. *Many* (saith he) *shall come from the East*: this was verify'd and began in those eastern *Magi* or Wisemen that came from the oriental Parts to worship and do homage to the Messiah, and to present him with the richest Offerings of their Country. Those *from the West*, were those great Multitudes that came from the western Parts to visit and adore this great Prophet that was sent from God; of whom it is said, that many believ'd in him: and these are here promis'd to *sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven*; meaning, that they should be counted for the spiritual Seed of those pious Patriarchs, and be Heirs of the Promises made to them and their Posterity. This is what our Saviour here took occasion from the Centurion's Faith to speak concerning the Calling in of the *Gentiles*, of which see more in the Epistle for the *Epiphany*.

The second thing he here takes notice of upon this Occasion, is the Rejection of the *Jews* for their Unbelief, in the next words; *But the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer Darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth*. By the Children of the Kingdom here, are meant the People of the *Jews*, who were appointed the true Heirs of the Kingdom; for to them appertain'd the Adoption, the giving of the Law, and Promises: From these, *as concerning the Flesh, Christ came*; and to these he was first sent, who for their straying from him are stil'd the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*. *He came unto his own*, (saith *St. John*) that is, to his own People the *Jews*, call'd his own peculiar People for his Descent from them, and the many great Privileges conferr'd on them; *but they receiv'd him not*, saith he: they would not believe his Doctrine, not agreeing with the vain Hopes of those temporal Honours and Advantages which they fondly expected from him; nor could all his Miracles convince them, or conquer the Prejudices they entertain'd against him. For this their obstinate Infidelity, they were utterly rejected by him; and instead of the Light of eternal Life, which they might have had by him, were cast into outer Darkness, there to lament their Folly with endless wailing, and gnashing of Teeth. *But to as many as receiv'd him, whether*

ther Jew or Gentile, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believ'd in his Name. Of which number was this Centurion in the Text, who believ'd his Word, and was fully persuaded of his Power, and for that reason receiv'd that gracious Answer to his Request, in the last words; And Jesus said unto the Centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believ'd so be it done unto thee. Which words had that good effect, that it follows, And his Servant was heal'd in the self-same hour. Which is the second Miracle here related.

This is briefly the Sum of the Gospel for this Day; from which we may learn these two or three useful Lessons.

And 1st, From Christ's healing the Leper and the Centurion's Servant, we may learn the great Goodness of our Saviour, in not with-holding his miraculous and healing Power from the meanest Objects. The Leper here is suppos'd to be a poor Person, having none to present or accompany him; but was drawn only by the Strength of his Faith, and the Exigence of his Distemper. And the Centurion's Servant, we may well think, was not much better, tho he had a good Master to intercede for him. However, Christ readily exerted his Power, and extended his Goodness in healing both: he rejects none for their Poverty, for he chose himself to be in that condition; and looks upon it not as a Hindrance, but a Qualification for his Mercy. He hath pronounc'd the Poor blessed, and declar'd that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; and having provided so well for them hereafter, to be sure he will not despise or neglect them here.

2^{dly}, From Christ's backing his Doctrine with Miracles, we may farther learn his great Care and Kindness for our Souls, that he leaves no means unattempted for our Conviction and Salvation. Indeed the Excellence and Usefulness of his Doctrine, if well consider'd, are sufficient to beget and increase our Faith in him; and his Word alone, if duly attended to and observ'd, is enough to bring us to eternal Life. But lest any should think that a Deceiver might publish as plausible a Doctrine, and that none is to be believ'd upon his bare Word, he thought fit to add those mighty and miraculous Works, that were abundantly sufficient to confirm the Truth of all that he said. *If I bear Witness of my self (saith he) my Witness is not true; that is, may not be so well rely'd upon: John 5. 31. But I have*

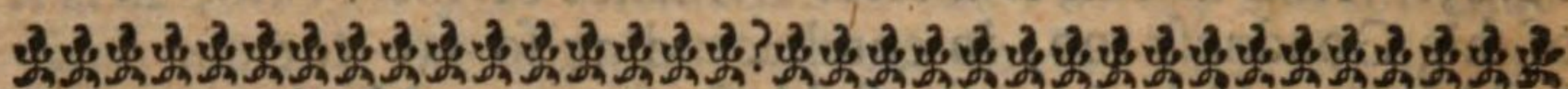
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have a greater Witness than that (saith he) for the Works which the Father hath given me to do, the same Works bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me; ver. 36. & John 10.25. And as this is a clear Evidence of his Truth, so is it of his Goodness too, in condescending so far for our Satisfaction; which is a fit Subject for our Meditation this Day.

3dly, We may learn hence the inexcusable Folly and Danger of Unbelief in Christ, after so full an Attestation of his Person and Doctrine. This was the deplorable Fault and Folly of the Jews, in not believing in Jesus, after all that he said or did among them; which brought great Miseries and Troubles upon them, and at last occasion'd their utter Rejection. Our Saviour makes this the inexcusable Aggravation of their Infidelity, that they would not be convinc'd by all his wonderful Works: *If I had not done among them (saith he) the Works that none other Man did, they had not had Sin; but now they have both seen and hated me and my Father: John 15. 24.* Now (saith he elsewhere) *they have no Cloak for Sin, nor any Excuse for all the Miseries that are come upon them.* This made him upbraid the Cities, where his mighty Works were done, saying, *Wo unto thee Corazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida; for if those mighty Works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sydon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes: therefore it shall be more tolerable for those heathen Cities, than for you.* And *thou Capernaum (saith he) which art exalted unto Heaven, by my Presence and Abode with you, and the Miracles done among you, shalt be cast down to Hell; for if the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remain'd to this day: Mat. 11. 21, &c.* And the same or heavier Punishments will befall us, if we fall off from our Faith in Christ, and contemn the Religion he hath so well confirm'd and settled among us.

Lastly, We may learn hence the Blessedness of those that believe and firmly adhere to their Faith in Christ. So Christ himself tells us, *Mat. 11.* where after he had appeal'd to his Miracles for the Proof of his Messiahship, two of which are, *the Lepers are cleans'd, and the Poor have the Gospel preach'd to them,* the two Miracles of this Day; he pronounces those *blessed that are not offended in him, ver. 6.* that is, they who continue stedfast in the Faith, with-
out

224 PRACTICAL DISCOURSES *on the*
out apostatizing or revolting from him, shall e'er long
receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their
Souls.



DISCOURSE XXIX.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday after
the Epiphany.

Rom. 13. 1 ——— 8.

*Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers, for
there is no Power but of God; the Powers that be,
are ordain'd of God: whosoever therefore resisteth
the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God, &c.*

THE Collect for this Day minds us of the many and
great Dangers which God knows we are set in the
midst of; insomuch that by reason of them and the
Frailty of our Natures, we cannot always stand upright:
and from thence teaches us to pray for such Strength and
Protection, as may support us in all Dangers, and carry us
thro all Temptations. To this end,

The Epistle for the Day directs us to the great Duty of
Subjection to Superiours, as a good means to procure their
Protection, and to prevent the many and great Evils and
Dangers of Resistance.

It begins with this general Admonition, *Let every Soul
be subject to the Higher Powers.* Where we have,

First, The Duty enjoin'd; and that is, Subjection.

*Secondly, The Persons that are to pay it; and that is,
every Soul.*

*Thirdly, The Persons to whom it is to be paid; and those
are, to the Higher Powers.* For the

*First, The Duty here enjoin'd is Subjection, Let every
one be subject.* Subjection here implies a Sense of the Place
or Station wherein God hath set us, that is, below or un-
der those who are appointed to rule and govern us; and like-

likewise the behaving our selves towards them accordingly ; both which are to be express'd by honouring their Persons, and obeying their Laws. *Know them that are over you in the Lord*, saith the Apostle ; and shew your Subjection to them,

1st, By honouring their Persons, and esteeming them sacred and inviolable, dignify'd with God's own Name, stamp'd with his Image, and invested with his Authority ; looking upon them as Persons anointed of God to be his Deputies and Viceroy's to govern this lower World, and so rais'd above the level of others to receive the Respect and Veneration of Mankind. Hence St. *Peter* couples together the Fear of God with honouring the King ; knowing that we cannot rightly do the one without the other. And this Honour is to be perform'd, not only by the inward Regard or Reverence of the Mind, in thinking honourably of them ; but by the outward Respect and Reverence of the Body, in speaking worthily, and demeaning our selves becomingly towards them.

But, 2^{dly}, To be subject, is not only to reverence the Persons, but to obey the Laws of Superiours. This is the principal Branch of the Subjection here enjoin'd, without which, the other is but mere Ceremony and Compliment : for to make a shew of honouring the Persons, without observing the lawful Commands of our Governours, is like the *Jews* Carriage to our Saviour, in saying, *Hail Master !* and *Crucify him* : 'tis to separate the Person from the Power, and by a Pretence of courting the one, to undermine and destroy the other. So that the Prince may say in this Case as our Saviour did in another, *Why call ye me Lord and King, and do not the thing that I command you ?* And therefore *Subjection to Principalities and Powers* is describ'd by *obeying Magistrates*, Tit. 3. 1. which is a Duty frequently and earnestly press'd in Holy Scripture : *Obey them that have the Rule over you in the Lord*, saith the Apostle ; and *submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake* ; 1 Pet. 2. 13. But,

Secondly, Who are to pay this Duty of Subjection ? Why, every one. So we are here told, *Let every Soul be subject* ; High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, none are exempted ; neither Apostles or Teachers, but all Men, Clergy as well as Laity, Noble and Ignoble, all must be subject : 'tis *every Soul*, without any Limitation or Ex-

ception; for as all Men stand in need of the Protection of Government, and partake of the Benefit of it, so are they all to pay Obedience to it, and none may pretend to an Immunity from it.

Thirdly, But to whom is this Subjection to be paid? Why that, we are here told, is to the Higher Powers; *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers*: that is, as St. Peter explains it, *First, to the King as supreme*; and next, *To Governours, as those that are sent by him*. Where the Supremacy of Kings, and the Subordination of inferiour Governours to them, and likewise the Submission and Obedience of Subjects to both, are expressly asserted. In short, the Higher Powers are all that in any Station in Church or State are plac'd above us; *As the King, and all that are put in Authority under him*; to whom every Soul is here strictly requir'd to be subject: Which Duty is press'd, in the following words, by sundry Arguments.

The 1st whereof is taken from the Author and Original of Power, in these words; *There is no Power but of God; the Powers that be, are ordain'd of God*. The Power of Princes is not, as some would have it, an Ordinance of Men, but of God; it proceeds not from any Compact or Contrivance of the People, but is an Appointment or Ordinance of our Maker. *There is no Power but of God*, either by Delegation or Permission: for all Power both in Heaven and Earth is his, and none can have any share in it, but what by the Course of Divine Providence is deriv'd from him: *By me Kings reign, (saith he) and Princes decree Justice*. 'Tis God's Authority by which our Superiours act, and 'tis He alone that gives them their Authority. For tho the Laws enacted by them are sometimes stil'd, *the Ordinances of Men*; yet the Power by which they make them, is the Ordinance of God: for so the next words tell us, *The Powers that be, are ordained of God*. From whence the Apostle infers,

2^{dly}, Another Argument for Subjection, taken from the Sinfulness of Resistance; *Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth an Ordinance of God*. Where by resisting we are to understand, all the Ways and Methods of opposing, or setting our selves against our Superiours; together with all the Means and Tendencies thereunto, by Thought, Word, or Deed.

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He that thinketh or wishes any Evil to them, resists them in his Heart; for he wants no Will, but the Opportunity only of doing them the greatest Mischief: And therefore we are bid not *to curse the King, no not in our very Thoughts*; Eccles. 10. 20.

He that plots and contrives against his Prince, resists him with his Head, by setting his Wits and his Brains a working against him. So did *Achitophel* against *David*, and so do all that secretly form and carry on Designs against lawful Authority; who are said *to take Counsel against the Lord and against his Anointed, and to be confederate against both.* Again,

He that speaks Evil of Princes, and slanders the Footsteps of God's Anointed, resists them with the Tongue, which by murdering their good Name oftentimes destroys both their Person and Government: for which reason we are strictly charg'd, *not to speak Evil of the Ruler of the People, nor slander the Lord's Anointed.* Above all,

He that takes up Arms and fights against his Prince, resists him with the Hand: and this is the highest degree of Resistance, to which all the other tend; and therefore we are forbid *to touch the Lord's Anointed, for none can stretch forth the Hand against him and be blameless.*

Now the Sinfulness of Resistance is here set forth, by *its resisting the Ordinance of God*: that is, since it hath pleased God to appoint Magistrates to order and govern the World in his stead; to oppose or resist them, is to set our selves against God, and to defy our Maker. To lift up our Hands against those whom God hath set over us, is to fight against him; 'tis a quarrelling with the Methods of his Providence, and in effect denying him the Government of the World; which is the greatest Affront and Indignity that can be offer'd to him, and will be sure to meet with a futable Punishment. And this will lead me,

3dly, To another Argument here brought for Subjection, taken from the Danger of Resistance, in these words, *And they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation.* The Word here render'd *Damnation*, in the Original signifies Judgment, or the just Punishment of a Crime; and is apply'd as well to temporal as eternal Punishments. So the unworthy Receivers of Christ's Body, eating and drinking their own Damnation, is expounded, as well of temporal Evils and Diseases, as of future and eternal Punishments.

In like manner the Damnation here threatned to Resisters, is to be understood partly of the just Punishments of this Life, and partly of everlasting Destruction in the World to come. As,

I. I say, *they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation*; that is, Condemnation and remarkable Judgments here in this World. 'Tis well known, how Vengeance commonly pursues Rebels and Traitors, and brings them to infamous and untimely ends, leaving their Bones behind them as the sad and lasting Monuments of their Rebellion: their secret Conspiracies usually come to light, and their open Resistance seldom goes unpunished; and that either immediately by the Hand of God, or more frequently by the Hands of Men. Sometimes God Almighty himself interposes and punishes Rebels immediately by his own Hand: So the *Israelites*, for their Rebellion, were smitten with the Pestilence; and *Corah* and his Complices for opening their Mouths against *Moses* and *Aaron*, had the Earth to open its Mouth and swallow them up. But this is commonly done by the Hands of Men; the supreme Magistrate, for his own and his People's Safety, bringing Rebels and Traitors to condign Punishment, and by such Examples preserving the Peace and Quiet of his Subjects: of which we our selves have known many Instances. But if any prove so fortunate as to prosper in their Rebellion, and escape the Censure and Penalties of human Laws; yet they shall surely *receive Damnation* in the next World: their Sin will pursue them to God's Tribunal, and there bring them to eternal Destruction of Body and Soul. Tho some crafty Offenders of this kind may, by cloaking their Rebellion with Religion, not only escape, but be rewarded too for their Wickedness; yet Justice will certainly overtake them in the next World, where they shall neither avoid the Sentence, nor flee from the Wrath to come. Impunity indeed may harden them here, and Success embolden them in their evil Courses; but a Day of Reckoning is coming, when they shall dearly rue for these things: and however they themselves may be lull'd into a fatal Security, yet Divine Vengeance will awaken them, and *their Damnation slumbereth not*. There will then be no hiding or palliating this Guilt with any false Colours, and much less any bribing or evading the just Punishment of it; no, all Contempt of Authority will be then found a Contempt of God, and assuredly receive the Sentence of Damnation.

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4thly, Another Argument here urg'd for Subjection, is taken from the End and Usefulness of Government; which is for the Encouragement of Vertue, and the Discouragement of Vice: so the next Words tell us, *For Rulers are not a Terror to Good Works, but to the Evil*; Ver. 3. The Design of Government is not to affright or discountenance good and loyal Persons, but to terrify the Evil and the Disobedient: So St. Peter likewise tells us, that Governours *are sent for the Punishment of Evil-Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well*; 1 Pet. 2. 14. *Parcere subjectis & debellare superbos*; to defend and reward the Good, and to punish and subdue the Bad.

Wilt thou then (saith our Apostle) not be afraid of the Power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: That is, do not disturb thy self with any unnecessary Fears of Princes becoming Tyrants, nor think upon every slight Occasion, of which thou art no competent Judg, that he useth his Power amiss; this is none of thy Province: look thou to thy own Duty, and if thou design no Ill, there will be little reason to fear or suspect any ill from the Magistrate: Do thou that which is good, and instead of Punishment thou shalt have Praise from him. God who governs the World, will so over-rule the Hearts of Kings, as to make them Instruments of procuring much Good, and averting much Evil from thee; so that if thou wouldst make a prudent Provision for thy self, and desirest to be secure from the Fears and Frowns of the Magistrate, do not offend against his Laws, but do what he commands, and then in all probability thou shalt find nothing but Encouragement and Reward from him. The reason whereof is added in the next words; *For he is the Minister of God to thee for Good*: that is, God hath appointed Kings not barely for State and Grandeur, but for the Good and Welfare of the People, to preserve their Rights, and to protect them from Wrong; that every one may sit quietly under his own Vine, and reap the Fruits of his own Labours. So St. Peter likewise informs us, that God hath set up Princes, and impower'd them to depute inferiour Magistrates and Rulers, *that we may live quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty.* And generally they who keep within the Sphere of their own Duty, leading godly, loyal, and honest Lives, live in great Peace and Quietness: 'Tis the Proud and Ambitious, the inordinate Lovers of Preheminence and worldly Interest, that disturb Government

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and

and embroil Kingdoms, and draw upon them the direful Effects and Consequents of it. So that if thou wilt not incur the Wrath and Punishment of the Magistrate, take care to keep to the Rules of Honesty and Vertue, and then thou needst not be afraid of any Terror or Trouble from him ; for he is God's Officer appointed for the Defence and Quiet of such as live justly and vertuously, and is not wont to punish for Well-doing, but for doing Ill.

But if thou do that which is Evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain. If thou wilfully violate the Laws, and break the Peace of Church or State, thou hast just reason to be afraid : for the Magistrate is intrusted with the Sword of Justice not barely for Show and Ostentation, nor to suffer it to rust in the Scabbard ; but to draw it out for the Terror of Evil-Doers, as well as the Defence of them that do well. *He is the Minister of God* for both ; not only to succour and secure the Innocent, but to be a *Revenger, to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.* For so he is oblig'd to do, as he is God's Officer and Commissioner.

From all which the Apostle infers, in the next Verse, the Necessity of Subjection ; *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake.* Meaning, that all due Obedience and Submission is to be paid to Magistrates, and that not merely from a Principle of Dread, or Fear of Punishment, which may be sometimes avoided or suspended ; but from a Principle of Conscience towards God, who hath laid this Duty and Obligation upon us, and requir'd all Christians to pay it for his sake. To which a reason is added in the next Words :

For, for this cause pay you Tribute also ; for they are God's Ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Where we have the reason, why Tribute and Customs are paid to Kings ; because they are Commissioners sent by God, who having a full Right to all that we possess, may justly assign a part of it to his Ministers to secure the rest, which is highly reasonable ; since they spend their Time and Themselves in arduous and difficult Tasks, merely to attend our Safety, and to provide for our Peace and Welfare. For which reason the common Consent of all Nations hath led them to pay Tribute to their Princes, as a Token of Subjection to them, as an Aid to their Office, and a Remuneration of the Pains taken for the Good of the People. And therefore the Apostle might very well subjoin the Advice in the following words :

Render

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Render therefore to all, their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour: that is, from these things well consider'd, there results a natural and necessary Obligation, to render to Princes those Aids and Assistances that belong to their Office, and to discharge all such ordinary and extraordinary Payments, as their weighty Affairs shall require. Our Saviour commanded Tribute to be paid to Heathen Emperors: And when it was demanded of him and *Peter*, he wrought a Miracle to pay it, lest they should offend, *Matth. 17.* When the *Pharisees* and *Herodians*, to entrap him, ask'd him the Question, *Is it lawful to give Tribute unto Cæsar?* he replied to them, *Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's:* which is the same with our Apostle's Advice here, *Render Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom:* both which are due to Sovereign Princes, as also that Fear, Honour, and Reverence, which by the Laws of God and Man belong to their Authority and Office.

This is briefly the Sense and Substance of this Day's Epistle, which contains the Nature and Necessity of Subjection to the Higher Powers, together with the Reasons and Arguments that enforce it, and the Motives and Principles upon which it is to be perform'd.

The Use we are to make of it will chiefly lie in these three things:

(1.) To learn and practise this great Duty of Subjection to our Superiours in Church and State.

(2.) To abhor and avoid all manner of Resistance.

(3.) Instead of disturbing and undermining Government, to contribute what we can to the Maintenance and Support of it. Of each a word. And,

(1.) From this Discourse, we may learn to observe and practise this great Duty of Obedience and Subjection to the Higher Powers, and that not as Slaves, for fear of the Lash and the just Punishments that may be inflicted by them; but as good Subjects and the Servants of God, out of a sense of Love and Duty to both. This the Rise of Power which is deriv'd from God, and the many Benefits we enjoy by it, may justly exact from us. There were some in the Apostles Days, who interpreted the Liberty purchased by Christ, to be a Freedom from the Yoke of Government; and there are too many in our Days, who shake off the

Yoke of Government upon the same or like Pretence: but the Doctrine and Example of Christ and his Apostles have abundantly refuted this Error; and the many Evils we have suffer'd by it, may teach us for ever to hate and abandon it, and to learn the Lesson of Loyalty and Obedience to those whom God is pleas'd to set over us.

(2.) From this Discourse we may learn to abhor and avoid all manner of Resistance, which is directly contrary to the Duty of Subjection. We have seen the Sinsfulness and Danger of it; 'tis a resisting the Ordinance of God, and thereby incurring the Peril of Damnation. Let us then carefully avoid all the Steps and Degrees leading to Rebellion, not harbouring any evil Thoughts or Wishes against our Superiours, which are apt to break out into evil Speeches and worse Actions: which we should the rather do, because *Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft*; it intoxicates and inveigles, spreads like a Gangrene, and few find the Evil of it till they feel it: 'tis a publick Mischief, that involves whole Countries in Misery and Desolation; for it dyes the Fields with Blood, and covers the Plains with the Carcases of the Slain. In a word, it exposes to all the Dangers of this World, and the Damnation of the next.

Wherefore, in the last place, instead of subverting and undermining, let us contribute what we can to the supporting of Government; by paying Tribute to our Prince, and keeping up, as far as may be, the Fear, Honour, and Reverence that is due to the Higher Powers: so shall we live the more easily here, and the more happily hereafter, Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXX.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday after
the Epiphany.

St. Matthew viii. 23, to the end.

And when he was entred into a Ship, his Disciples followed him. And behold! there arose a great Tempest in the Sea, insomuch that the Ship was cover'd with the Waves; but he was asleep, and his Disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us, we perish. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith, &c.

OF the Collect for this Day, which puts us in mind of the many and great Dangers with which we are beset, I have already spoken: And likewise of the Epistle for the Day, which directs us to one way of escaping them; and that is, by Subjection to Superiours, which will gain us the Favour and Protection of Magistrates, and thereby defend us from many Perils and Dangers that must otherwise befall us. I proceed now to

The Gospel for this Day, which minds us of other Dangers, and of another way of escaping them; and that is, by calling upon God, who is ever ready to hear and deliver us out of all our Troubles. In speaking to the Words of this Gospel, 'twill be requisite to consider the Occasion and Connection of them with the foregoing; which is briefly this.

When Christ had finish'd his Divine Sermon on the Mount, he came down from the Mountain, with great Multitudes following him; and coming to Capernaum, he there confirm'd the Truth of his Doctrine with Miracles and many wonderful Works, as the preceding part of the Chapter informs us, where we read of his curing of a Leper of a dangerous Leprosy, ver. 2, 3. of his healing a Centurion's Servant of a grievous Palsy, ver. 6, 7, &c. of his

his restoring *Peter's Wife's Mother* of a long and inveterate Fever, *ver. 14, 15.* And when Even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with Devils; and he cast out the Spirits with his Word, and healed all that were sick: *ver. 16.* Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, to get out of the Throng and Crowd of People, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side of the Lake of *Gennesareth*, or the Sea of *Tiberias*, out of a great Compassion (as'tis thought) to the many miserable Demoniacs or possess'd Persons that were there. But the Multitude still following him to the shore, he preach'd unto them till the Evening, and then took shipping: And here beginneth the Gospel for this Day; And when he was entred into a Ship, his Disciples, and none else, followed him. Where after some short Discourse with his Disciples alone, he bid them launch out, and make towards the other side. When they were set forth, our Saviour, weary'd with the Work and Business of the Day, retir'd to the hinder part of the Ship, and there lay down to compose himself to Sleep: so the next Verse tells us, that *he was asleep.* Now this gives us to understand, that Christ was truly a Man, subject to the like Infirmities with our selves: for he ate, and drank, and slept, as we do; was weary and faint, as we are; and was every way like unto us, Sin only excepted: for *as Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he likewise took part of the same.* He grew up by the same degrees, increasing in Wisdom and Stature as we do; he was fed with the same Nourishment, and was liable to the same Weaknesses as we are. Hence the Apostle declares, that *we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin; Heb. 4. 15.* And so it behoved him (saith the same Apostle) in all things to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining unto God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People; for in that he himself suffer'd, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. *Heb. 2. 16, 17, 18.* Where his Sufferings shew the Verity of his human Nature, and that he was truly a Man like our selves.

This is to be believ'd against a sort of Hereticks, who affirm'd Christ not to be really a Man, but only a Ghost or Apparition; that he assum'd only a Body of Air, and therein appear'd and conversed for a while, and then vanish'd away. Against these we find the Fathers often arguing,

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guing, from the Properties of a Body, which were all in him; for he was seen, heard, and felt, and had all the Senses and Qualities that belong to a Body, and to no other. Yea, we find Christ himself confuting this Error, by condescending to the Faith of his Apostle; for when after his Resurrection some of them were terrify'd and affrighted at him, as if they had seen a Spirit, he bid them handle him and see him, for a Spirit had not Flesh and Bones as they saw him to have: and this we learn here, by his Weariness and lying down to sleep.

But while he was thus taking his rest, and the Ship gone a little out into the Sea, *Behold! there arose a great Tempest in the Sea, insomuch that the Ship was covered with the Waves:* which Waves beating into the Ship, almost fill'd it with Water, and made it just ready to sink. This our Saviour permitted, to try the Faith of his Disciples, and to make them sensible of their own Weakness. Now this may teach us, in the midst of a Calm to expect and provide for a Storm; for this World is like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest, and our State and Condition in it ebbs and flows like that: sometimes a prosperous Gale fills our Sails, and then we go on with great Alacrity and Chearfulness; by and by a Storm arises, and then we are in danger of sinking or suffering shipwreck. Joy and Sorrow here take their turns, and Prosperity is chequer'd and mingled with Adversity. God Almighty is pleas'd to exercise even the best Men with Troubles and Afflictions here, not for their Prejudice, but for their great Good, to try their Faith, and to exercise their Patience; both which are best refin'd in the Furnace of Affliction, for they thereby become the more conspicuous, and render their Reward the more glorious: which may put us all upon looking and preparing our selves for these things, to be arm'd against they come, that we be not surpriz'd or unprovided at their coming; and then no Temptation can befall us, from which we cannot find a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

But how did the Disciples behave themselves in this great and sudden Storm? Why, being much affrighted (as the next words declare) *they came to our Saviour, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us, we perish.* Their Fear drove them to Christ; and awaking him out of Sleep, they call'd upon him to preserve them from sinking, and to help them out of their great and imminent Danger. Afflictions bring those unto God, who would otherwise keep at a distance
from

from him, and cause them to cry unto him, whom at other times they utterly neglect and forget. The Mariners in a Storm call'd each of them upon their God in their Prayers, whom in a Calm they never mention'd but in their Oaths and Imprecations. *David* in his Prosperity said, *I shall never be moved, thou Lord hast made my Mountain to stand so strong.* He began to grow secure, and to build too much upon the Firmness of his Strength and Station; till God saw fit to shake him by an Affliction, and then he soon found his own Weakness; which made him say, *Thou hidest thy Face from me, and I was troubled.* Hence we find him acknowledging, that before he was troubled he went astray, and therefore that it was good for him to be afflicted: and if we make a right use of our Troubles, they will still work together for good; that is, for our present Peace and Comfort here, and for the Increase of our future Glory. *In their Afflictions* (saith God) *they will seek me early:* and so we find the Disciples here did, in the Extremity of the Tempest, crying out, *Lord save us, or else we perish.*

Where we may observe farther, that the Disciples did not use many words in their Prayer, nor run out their Petitions, like the *Pharisees*, into Length and Loquacity. They did not enlarge upon the Raging of the Sea, the Fury of the Winds, or the Boisterousness of the Waves, fruitful Topicks of Invention and Eloquence; but darted out their Request in a short ejaculatory Petition, *Lord save us, we perish:* like the poor Publican, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner!* which prevail'd more for his Justification, than the long Prayer of the *Pharisee*. God Almighty neither needs nor cares for many words; and if a Word be enough to the Wise, sure there can be no need of many to him, who is Wisdom it self. *Solomon*, the wisest of Men, bids us to consider, *That God is in Heaven, and we upon Earth; and therefore wills that our Words unto him should be few.* And our Blessed Saviour hath contracted all our Wants and Desires into a short Form of Prayer of his own composing, for the use of his Followers; which may teach us to avoid the Battology and much speaking of the Heathens, and likewise the vain Repetitions and long Prayers of the *Pharisees*, and to prefer a well-compos'd Devotion before long extempore Effusions.

But what was our Saviour's Answer to the Prayer of the Disciples? Why,

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1st, He rebuk'd them for their great Fear and want of Faith in him, *saying unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith?* They had before own'd him for the Son of God, and were, by the many Miracles they had seen, convinc'd of his Divine and Almighty Power; and what reason could they have to doubt of his Ability to help them in the greatest Storm? Sure they need not fear Death in the company of the Lord of Life, and they must be Men of little Faith, to distrust the Conduct of such an All-wise and Almighty Pilot. This unreasonable Fear he blamed in them, as an Argument of great Weakness, and a Reflection upon his Divine Power and Goodness.

2^{dly}, *He arose, and rebuk'd the Winds and the Sea, saying, as St. Mark relates it, Peace, be still, and there was a great Calm. At his word (saith the Psalmist) the stormy Wind ariseth, which lifteth up the Waves thereof; they are carry'd up to the Heaven, and down again to the Deep; their Soul melteth away because of the Trouble, but when they cry unto the Lord in their Trouble, he delivereth them out of their Distress; for he maketh the Storm to cease, so that the Waves thereof are still: then are they glad, because they are at rest, and so he bringeth them to the Haven, where they would be: Psal. 107. 25, 26, &c.* This is either a Prediction or a Description of the Disciples Case in this Tempest, where, at God's Command, the Waves beat into the Ship, and almost fill'd it with Water. In this Distress they cry'd unto the Lord for help to save them from sinking, which they soon found; for at Christ's Word the Storm presently ceas'd, and turn'd into a great Calm.

That which we are to learn from hence, is, the Efficacy and Success of a hearty and fervent Prayer, which St. James tells us *prevaileth much*, as it did in this Case, and might be easily prov'd in many other; which should teach us to have recourse to it, as the best Remedy in all our Extremities. But what follow'd hereupon? Why, *the Men marvell'd, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the Winds and the Sea obey him?* And well they might, for there was never Man like him, he was God as well as Man, and that gave him the power over the Winds and Sea. He spake all things into Being by his Word, both in Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and in all deep Places, and therefore might well have the Rule and Command of them: *By his Word was the Heavens made, and the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth; it is he that commandeth the Waters,*

Waters, and stilleth the raging of the Sea; at his Rebuke they flee, at the Voice of his Thunder they are afraid; the Voice of the Lord is mighty in Operation, the Voice of the Lord is a glorious Voice: for if he speak the Word, the Winds are hush'd; and if he command, the Waters of the Sea stand still. So here, by the Breath of his Mouth, he assuag'd a violent Tempest, and by a word's speaking created a great Calm: which may teach us to magnify and adore his infinite Power and Greatness, to call upon him in times of Distress, and to put our Trust in him in the greatest Dangers.

But to go on with our Saviour's Voyage: When he and his Disciples were safely arriv'd *at the other side of the Lake, they landed in the Country of the Gadarens or Gergesenes, suppos'd to be the antient Country of the Gergashites, mention'd in Gen. 10. 16. a Region given by Moses to the Tribe of Reuben, Dan, and half the Tribe of Manasses; inhabited, in our Saviour's time, partly by Jews, but mostly by the Gentiles, as appears by the multitude of Swine nourish'd there, which were us'd and sold by the Gentiles, but hated and abominated by the Jews.*

Now this Country at that time abounded much with Demoniacks, and Persons possess'd with evil Spirits, which was the occasion of our Saviour's going thither, *viz. to shew his Power and Goodness in dispossessing them. Accordingly, as soon as he was come into the Country, there met him two possess'd with Devils, coming out of the Tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no Man might pass by that way.* These miserable Wretches were wofully haraï'd by evil Spirits, haunting in and about the Tombs, Places of great Horror and Solitude, sought out by the Devils as Places most advantageous to them. However, at Christ's coming to them, they soon perceiv'd who and what he was; and being struck with a sudden Dread of his Power and Presence, *behold, they cry'd out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Where confessing him to be the Son of God, and Saviour of Mankind, they beg him to let them alone, pleading their not having any thing to do with him, either in molesting or affronting of him; and therefore adjure him not presently to expel them out of the Country, or send them too soon into the Abyss appointed for them, which would be to torment them before the time. In which words they urge, that tho they are reserv'd in Chains of Darknes to the Judgment of the Last Day,

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Day, yet they have, by God's Permission, certain Circuits and Regions in the Air assign'd to them, where they have the liberty to range and rule till that time; and therefore since the time of remanding them to their Prisons is not yet come, they beseech him not to hasten it, or torment them before the time. *Now there was at that time, a good way off from them, an Herd of many Swines feeding: for Gadara is by Josephus reckon'd among the Grecian Cities that Pompey took away from the Jews; and being then inhabited by the Syrians, they might well abound with Swine, tho they were not before permitted by the Jews. Here-upon*

The Devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the Herd of Swine. The Devils knowing that Christ would dispossess them, to shew his Power for the Conversion of the Country, they besought him to permit them at least to enter into the Swine, that is, unclean Spirits into unclean Beasts: which thing they desir'd, with a design to incense the *Gadarens* and Owners of the Swine against our Lord; and so they accordingly did, as we shall see after. However, Christ granted the Request of these evil Spirits, for he said unto them, *Go; he gave them leave, saith St. Mark; he suffer'd them, saith St. Luke: so they came out, and went into the Herd of Swine.* From whence one hath wittily observ'd, that the Devil will play a small Game rather than stand out; if he cannot stay in Men, he will go into the Swine; and if he cannot do Mischief one way, he will try another. He is restless and busy in carrying on his wicked Designs; and when he is beaten out of one Hold, he will be ever seeking another. Hence he is said to be still compassing the Earth, going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour; which shews both his Subtlety and his Rage, and likewise how like unto him are all they who study and delight in doing Mischief. These are said to be of their Father the Devil, that his Works they do, and that he will pay them their Wages. But what happen'd to these Swine after the Devil's Entrance into them? Why, 'tis said, *the whole Herd of them ran violently down a steep Place into the Sea.* Here the fore-mention'd Person observes again, that they must needs go whom the Devil drives. The evil Spirits are active and quick in their Motion, and, like *Jehu*, drive very furiously; for this they chose a steep Place, or the Side of a Hill, the better to hasten and precipitate their Motion. Hence they

they that are hurry'd on violently in their Career, or run down rashly from any steep Place, are proverbially said to run, as if the Devil were in them: which should teach us to keep at as great a distance from, and to hearken to him as little as we can; and rather pray not to be led into Temptation, but to be deliver'd from the evil one. And for our Encouragement, we are told, that *if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us*. We see Christ's Power over him; and the Apostles declare, that the Devils were subject unto them thro his Name, and with this Power he hath promis'd to arm all his faithful Followers.

But what became of these Swine after this violent Motion? Why, 'tis said, that *they perish'd in the Waters*. From whence the same ingenious Person wittily observes, that the Devil brought his Hogs to a fair Market. He hurry'd them on headlong to their own Ruin, and so will he do with all them that are led by him: which may teach us to be upon our Guard, and to watch against the Wiles of the Devil, that we be not insnar'd or circumvented by him. This is St. Peter's Advice, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, like a roaring Lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*; 1 Pet. 5. 8. *whom resist, stedfast in the Faith*.

But what effect had these things upon the People of the Country? Why, *they that kept the Swine fled, and went their way into the City, and told them every thing, and what was befallen to the Possess'd of the Devil*. They gave them notice of the Loss of the Swine, with the occasion and manner of it, and likewise how the evil Spirits, at Christ's Command, went out of Persons possess'd with them. And then it follows, *And behold the whole City went out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him, that he would depart out of their Coasts*. Instead of being wrought upon by his Miracles to believe in him, and to desire his Continuance among them, they for a little inconsiderable Damage rudely desire him to be gone, and to leave their Country, preferring the saving of their Swine before the saving of their Souls; as if the Devil, upon leaving the Swine, had enter'd into them. And such is the Folly and Misery of Worldlings, who part with Christ for a little Pelf, and value the Loss of a few perishing Trifles here on Earth, before that of an everlasting Treasure in Heaven: But the Gospel for this Day teaches better things, *viz.* to follow our Saviour, and to lift up our Minds and Desires above all earthly

earthly things. Let not then what hath been said be as the casting of Pearls before Swine; but, with the rich Merchant in the Gospel, let us sell all, to purchase that Pearl of great Price, that will enrich and ennoble us for ever: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXI.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

Coloss. iii. 12 — 18.

Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing and forgiving one another: if any Man have a Quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches the Lord to keep his Church and Household continually in his true Religion; that they who do lean only upon the Hope of his heavenly Grace, may evermore be defended by his mighty Power. To obtain which Petition,

The Epistle for the Day directs to many excellent Vertues or Christian Graces, necessary to preserve the Church in the true Religion, and to engage the Divine Power to protect the Members in it. To which ends, it begins with these words; *Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, Holy and Beloved) Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, &c.* where the Apostle bespeaks Christians in the most endearing Titles and Expressions, styling them, *The Elect of God*, that is, Persons chosen by him out of the World to be a peculiar People; *Holy*, in respect of that holy Profession to which they are call'd; *Beloved*, that is, highly priz'd and valu'd of God, who hath set his Love upon them above the rest of the World. Which Expressions he here uses as so many Motives and Inducements to such Duties as are suitable to so high and eminent Privileges; willing them as such, or as becometh such, to *put on Bowels of Mercy, &c.* The Phrase of putting on alludes either to Armour, which is put on for Defence, or Apparel, which is put on for Ornament and a Covering; both which give us to understand,

that Grace is the best Armour and Apparel of the Soul, which we are therefore to put on to guard it from all Evil, and to furnish it with all manner of Good. And here,

The 1st thing he wills us to put on, is *Bowels of Mercy*; by which we are to understand such a tender and compassionate Temper, as inclines to commiserate the Necessities of the Poor, and relieve the Wants of the Needy: 'tis oppos'd to Hardness of Heart, or such an unrelenting Spirit, upon which the loudest Cries and Miseries of the Poor can make no Impression, or draw any Pity or Relief from it.

2^{dly}, We are bid to put on *Kindness*; that is, such an affable, courteous and friendly Disposition, as makes Men ready to do all good Offices to all Men, treating them with Civility and Respect, speaking always favourably to and of them, and in all things shewing a candid, ingenuous and obliging Behaviour towards them. And this is oppos'd to a Roughness and Sourness of Behaviour, which is uneasy to all they converse with, and is distasteful to all that come near them: like *Nabal*, who was so *churlish* that a Man could not speak to him, call'd therefore a *Son of Belial*; or like the *Pharisees* of old, who were morose, sullen and froward, and troublesome to all about them. And there are but too many still among us, who pretend to higher Measures of Knowledg and Religion than others, and yet are of such waspish, peevish and churlish Spirits, that few can live easily by or with them.

3^{dly}, We are here call'd upon to put on *Humbleness of Mind*; or as *St. Peter* expresses it, to be clothed with *Humility*: in both which there is an Allusion to a Garment, and it signifies that Humility is the Badg of our Christianity, which is therefore to be put on and worn by all Christians. Now this Humbleness of Mind implies low and mean Thoughts of our selves, in Honour preferring one another, and esteeming others better than our selves; and so 'tis oppos'd to Pride, which is the assuming more Honour to our selves than belongs to us, and thence lifting up our selves above others, and so swelling with vain Conceit, as to despise and look down with Contempt on those that perhaps are far before or above them.

4^{thly}, We are here commanded to put on *Meekness*; that is, such a Mildness or Gentleness of Temper as is not easily ruffled with Passion, or discompos'd with Discontent; but to preserve a constant Calmness and Evenness of Spirit under all the Evils and Events of Providence: which is to learn that excellent Lesson of our Saviour, *To be meek and lowly in Heart*, *Mat. 11. 29.* And this is oppos'd to those fiery and unruly Passions,

Passions, with which some are easily inflam'd and transported; which we are therefore to subdue, and in all things to govern our selves with a Spirit of Meekness.

5thly, We are here bid to *put on Long-suffering*; that is, a patient bearing of Wrongs, and a Slowness to demand Satisfaction: not lying at the catch, or taking all Advantages against a Neighbour, much less troubling him for any little Offence, nor requiring strict Reparation for every petty Damage or Trespals we may have sustain'd; not breaking off Friendship for the first Unkindness, but passing by small Matters, and waiting awhile for the Amendment of greater. And this is oppos'd to a fierce, hasty Spirit, that is mov'd to Revenge and Reparation upon every slight Occasion; whereas Long-suffering puts us upon trying all the Arts and Methods of Patience, being unwilling to bring things to extremities, and inclin'd rather to suffer, than to do any Wrong: As an Effect of this, we are in the next words,

6thly, Put upon *forbearing one another*: This relates to the involuntary Failings and Infirmities of Mankind, which we are rather to pity and bear with, than to publish and censure. The Wise-man tells us, that *the righteous Man falleth seven times a day*; and the Apostle, that *in many things we offend all*: and as we beseech God, *not to be extreme to mark all that we do amiss*; so are we in like manner to overlook, and, as much as we may, to excuse and bear with the Weaknesses and Miscarriages of one another. And this is oppos'd to all rash judging and censuring each other; for which, as we have no Authority, so have we just reason to fear and expect, that *the same Measure we mete unto others should be measur'd unto us again*. To this is added,

7thly, The *forgiving one another*: If any Man have a Quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. By which we are to understand a Readiness to pardon and pass by any Offences done to us; which Solomon tells us is *the Glory of Man*; or a Willingness to be reconcil'd to any that have wronged us, even to our bitterest Enemies: thereby imitating the Example of our Blessed Saviour, who forgave the greatest Wrongs, and not only pray'd, but dy'd for those that brought him to a bloody and accursed Death. And this is oppos'd to all Thoughts and Desires of Revenge, which we are taught carefully to avoid; and instead of being *overcome of Evil, to overcome Evil with Good*. Rom. 12. ult.

But above all these things, we are bid, in the next Verse, to *put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness*. Now

Charity comprizes both the Love of God and our Neighbour, and is therefore said to be *the fulfilling of the Law*: and here it is call'd the *Bond of Perfection*, because it includes and fastens all Christian Graces together, as appears by the thirteenth Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*; where the Nature and Properties, the Excellency and Extent of this Grace is fully set forth: which Portion of Scripture being the Epistle for *Quinquagesima* Sunday, is there more largely handled; to which therefore I refer the Reader,

And proceed to the next thing here exhorted to: and that is, to *let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body; and to be thankful*: ver. 15. The Peace of God here, is that Peace of which God is both the Author and the Rewarder. And this Peace is both inward and outward: Inward Peace consists in the Satisfaction of the Mind arising from a Sense of the Pardon of our Sins, and Reconciliation with our Maker, whom we had offended by them: of this is that of the Apostle, *being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God*, Rom. 5. 1. And this Peace the Apostle would have to *rule in our Hearts*; that is, so to guide and govern our Affections, as to keep this Peace with God, and preserve that Comfort and Tranquillity of Mind that results from it. But beside this, there is an outward Peace with Men, hinted at in these words, *to which also ye are called in one Body*: and this consists in agreeing and uniting together in the Communion of the Church. Nothing is more frequent in the New Testament, than to compare the Church to a *Body*, for the several Members, and the different Offices and Situation of them. The Unity of the Church is set forth by *one Body* animated by one Spirit, to signify the Harmony, Concord and Sympathy of all the Parts. Now the being call'd or incorporated into this one Body, imports the preserving this Harmony or Communion of all its Members entire and inviolable; which is the Sense of that Exhortation, to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; Eph. 4. 2, 3. And this Peace, or Peaceableness too, is to *rule our Hearts*, to compose our Spirits, and to be (as the original Word signifies) an Umpire or Judge to determine all Differences; which may be easily done by a meek, humble and peaceable Spirit, but without it never. To which the Apostle here adds,

The great Duty of Gratitude, in these words, *And be ye thankful*; wherein he wills us to give Thanks for all the Helps and Discoveries of Divine Grace, and to be ever ready to return the same Mercy and Kindness to others, which we receive

ceive or hope for at the hands of God. For the better performing whereof, he advises in the next place to the diligent reading and hearing of God's Word, ver. 16. *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom*: where, by the *Word of Christ*, we may understand in general the Holy Scriptures, and more especially the Doctrine of the Gospel, which contain the inspir'd Oracles of God, and the Revelation of the Divine Will, for the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind.

By this *Word's dwelling in us*, is meant not a transient View or slight Hearing of it, but the making its constant Stay and Abode with us. And these things differ from each other, as a Guest does from an Inhabitant, or a Traveller from the House-keeper; the one is here to-day and gone to-morrow, the other takes up his constant Residence and Abode with us. So that the Word of God's dwelling in or with us, implies the receiving it not as a Stranger that comes now and then, but as a constant Companion and Counsellor, to be still with us to direct us in all our Ways. *The Word is nigh thee* (saith St. Paul) *even in thy Mouth and in thy Hand*; but let it be in thy Heart too, and make it the Subject not of thy Talk only, but of thy daily Study and Meditation. There are some who will sometimes give the Word the hearing, and afford it a Passage into one Ear, and out at the other, but it makes no Stay, much less does it *dwell* there; but like the Seed that fell by the Way-side, 'tis trodden under feet, and the Fowls of the Air devour it. There are others who will give the Word a little longer Entertainment, and receive it awhile with Joy, being pleas'd with the Matter, or the Method, or the Composition of the Sermon; but not receiving it into the Heart, it makes but a short Stay with them, and having no Root, like the Seed that fell upon the Rock, it soon withers and dies away. Again, there are others who seem more devout and religious Lovers of God's Word, being all for hearing, and mightily frequenting Sermons and Lectures; but this proceeding many times from an outward Show or Form of Godliness, or for the promoting of some worldly or secular End, the Word of God does not dwell or abide with them, but, like the Seed that fell among Thorns, is choak'd by the Love and Cares of the World, and brings forth no Fruit to Perfection. In short then, to let the Word of God dwell in us, is to receive the Love of it into our Hearts, to make it our Delight and Meditation day and night, and to bring forth Fruit with Patience.

But what is it to dwell *richly in us in all Wisdom*? Why, 'tis to have our Minds enrich'd with the Knowledg of Divine Truths, to increase daily in Wisdom, and to draw constant and fresh Supplies out of the inexhaustible Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg, to answer all the Wants and Necessities of our Soul; in a word, 'tis to *abound more and more in Knowledg, and in all Judgment, to discern and approve things that are excellent, that we may be sincere and without Offence to the Day of Christ*, as our Apostle pray'd in behalf of the *Philippians*, Chap. 1. 9, 10.

To the hearing of the Word, the Apostle here subjoins the singing of Psalms, in the next words; *Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing with Grace in your Hearts to the Lord*: where Singing is made a sort of teaching and edifying one another, being a great Help to the raising our Hearts, and exciting our Devotion towards God. And upon this, as also upon many other places of Scripture, is the Practice of our Church in joining the Singing of Psalms with the publick Instructions sufficiently warranted. St. Paul exhorts the *Ephesians* to be *speaking to themselves in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing and making Melody in their Hearts to the Lord*; Chap. 5. 19. this being of excellent Use to move the Affections and elevate the Desires in the Service of God. I know some jarring and discordant Souls have blam'd the Use of Musick, especially Instrumental, in the Worship of God; deeming it a part of that *Jewish* and Ceremonial Service, that was to cease at Christ's Coming. But with how little colour of Reason this is objected, will be evident to any that considers, that Musick, either Vocal or Instrumental, was never a part of the Ceremonial Law, nor was ever mention'd or prescrib'd by it: for *Miriam's* Song upon the *Israelites* Deliverance out of *Egypt* was long before the giving of the Law; and Instrumental Musick was instituted long after by King *David*, who frequently us'd both himself, and commanded them to be us'd upon many solemn Occasions; nor do either of them typify any thing that was to cease at Christ's Coming, but have a natural and perpetual Use in sounding forth the Praises of our Maker.

Others again tell us, that they find this kind of Musick rather a Hindrance than a Help to their Devotion. But these Men contradict not only the Precept and Practice of King *David*, but the Experience of good Men in all Ages, who have found their Affections stirr'd, their Thoughts compos'd, and

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and their Minds better elevated in the Worship of God. In short, the Angels singing a Hymn at our Saviour's Birth, and the Apostles frequent calling upon us to sing Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, with Melody in our Hearts to the Lord, plainly shew it to be no needless Ceremony, but a useful and Gospel-Duty.

Lastly, The Epistle closes up with this general Exhortation; *And whatsoever ye do in Word or Deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving Thanks unto God, and the Father by him*: that is, in all your Actions, civil and religious, have an eye to your Saviour; let all your Prayers be presented in his Name, which alone can procure them Acceptance, and give them a sweet-smelling Savour; let your Works be all done and offer'd up thro his Merits, which alone can give them all their Worth; and let all your Prayers and good Works be ever accompany'd with Praises, paying your continual Thanks and Acknowledgments to the Father for the Mercies vouchsafed to you in Jesus Christ, and directing all your Actions to his Praise and Glory.

These are all the material Passages of this Day's Epistle, the due Improvement whereof will lie in these things:

(1.) In labouring to adorn our Souls with the Graces, Virtues, and excellent Qualities recommended in it; as to *put on Bowels of Mercy, Compassion and Kindness* towards others; or, as St. Peter expresses it, *to love as Brethren, to be pitiful and courteous*, aiding, comforting, and relieving one another: next, to *put on Humbleness of Mind*, in respect of our selves, *not thinking more highly of our selves than we ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every one the Measure of Faith*; which St. Peter expresses by being *clothed with Humility*. These the Apostle would have us so to put on, as never to put off more; for 'tis Rayment that will never wax old or wear out, and nothing can better become Christians than the Ornaments of a meek and quiet Spirit. Again, let us put on Patience and Long-suffering under all the Evils and Sufferings that may befall us, which is the best way to make them sit easy upon us, and will make them soonest go off. And therefore St. James exhorts us *in Patience to possess our Souls*; as if Patience alone gave Men the Possession of themselves, and he that is out of Patience, is out of the Possession of his Soul.

Moreover, We are exhorted here to *forbearing one another*, not breaking out into hasty and violent Passions, nor straining

up Matters to the utmost Rigour and Severity of Laws, but bearing with one another's Infirmities, and using a Conscience and Moderation in all our Ways and Dealings with each other: And likewise forgiving one another, if any Difference shall arise, not studying Revenge, or rendring Evil for Evil; but by Christ's Example, as well as Precept, forbearing and forgiving one another.

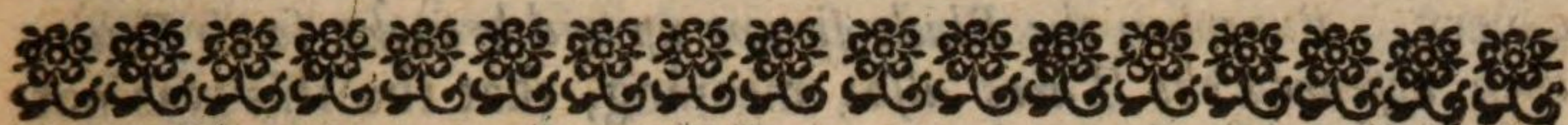
But because Charity is the Sum and Perfection of all other Graces, let us above all things put on that Bond of Perfectness, which will make us perfect and compleat, lacking nothing; for that will procure and preserve Peace both with God and Man: and if that rule and govern our Hearts, it will beget and keep a lasting Peace there too.

(2.) As a Means to attain to all these Graces, let us set a high Price and Value on the Word of God, and suffer it to dwell in us richly in all Wisdom; for 'tis by the heavenly Seed of God's Word that those Graces are begotten in us. Holy *Job* prefer'd it before his appointed Food; and *David* in the 119th Psalm labours hard to express the Love and high Esteem he had of it: by whose Examples let us too hear it with Diligence, retain it with Faithfulness, and practise it with Perseverance; this being the Food that feeds our Souls to Eternal Life. To which let us add,

(3.) The Singing of Psalms, and other Hymns, and spiritual Songs, making Melody in our Hearts unto God. This is the Way prescrib'd for our praising of God here on Earth, and 'tis that which can best fit and prepare us to sing forth his Praises for ever in Heaven. This is the Work of the Angels and glorify'd Spirits above, and the Happiness to which we hope to attain hereafter; and we must now tune our Hearts to the Harmony of that heavenly Quire, if ever we expect to bear a part in that Blessed Consort.

Finally, In all our Actions let us have regard to the Honour of our Maker, that *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we may do all to the Praise and Glory of God.*

These are the Lessons which we are taught in the Service of this Day; which if we will be persuaded to learn and practise, we shall find Rest and Comfort to our Souls at the present, and Everlasting Peace and Happiness at the last. To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, thro the Merits of Jesus Christ, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXII.

The G O S P E L for the Fifth Sunday after the
Epiphany.

St. Matthew xiii. 24—30.

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a Man, which sowed good Seed in his Field: But while Men slept, his Enemy came and sowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his way; but when the Blade was sprung up, and brought forth Fruit, then appeared the Tares also, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains the Parable of the Tares; which, in pursuance of the Collect for this Day, distinguishes the true Religion, in which we pray to be kept, from Errors and false Doctrine, from which we desire to be preserv'd.

The Parable begins with the Gospel in these words; *The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a Man, that sowed good Seed in his Field*: where, by *the Kingdom of Heaven*, is to be understood the State of the Church here upon Earth, or the Preaching of the Gospel; for so 'tis often understood in the New Testament, especially in the Parables. By *the Man* that sowed good Seed in his Field, we are to understand Christ, the Son of Man, who came down from Heaven to reveal his Father's Will: The *good Seed* are the Children of the Kingdom, or good Christians, that receive his Word, and obey his Will: *The Field* is the World, or more especially the Christian Church planted and inclos'd in it. *But while Men slept, his Enemy came and sowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his way*; where *the Tares* are the Children of the Wicked one, Hereticks or Seducers, who fall themselves, or lead others into Errors and Divisions: *The Enemy* that sowed them is the Devil, who takes the Opportunity of Mens Sloth and Supineness, to mingle the Cockle of Error among the Wheat of sound
found

sound Doctrine, and then hides himself to keep it from Discovery. *But when the Blade sprung up and brought forth Fruit, then appeared the Tares also;* meaning, that tho this was not discern'd presently at the time of sowing, yet when the Corn grew up, and began to ear, then the Weeds and Darnel were seen among it. Errors and Schisms are at first sown in secret, and carry'd on under Disguises; but when they grow up, and overtop or suppress the Truth, then is the Danger discover'd, when 'tis too late to prevent it.

So the Servants of the Householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good Seed in thy Field? from whence then hath it Tares? He said unto them, *An Enemy hath done this.* These Words containing the main Drift and Design of the whole Parable, I shall observe in them these three things.

First, Our Saviour's great Care in sowing good Seed in the Field of his Church; *Sir, didst not thou sow good Seed in thy Field?* which was not a Question of Doubt, but Certainty, and implies a strong Affirmation that he did so.

Secondly, The unhappy Rise of Errors and Divisions, notwithstanding all this Care: *From whence then hath it Tares?* which Question plainly supposes the Springing up and Growth of them.

Thirdly, The Author and Sower of these Tares; which is the Devil, the great Enemy of Christ and his Church: *An Enemy hath done this.*

First, I say, here is held forth *our Saviour's great Care in sowing good Seed in the Field of his Church:* Now this good Seed is of several kinds, and may be reduc'd to the three Heads, of the Doctrine, Discipline, Devotion or Communion of the Church; all which are so order'd, as may best promote the Welfare and Salvation of all its Members.

For the Doctrine of the Church, that consists chiefly in Matters of Faith and Practice: The former teaches us what and how much we are to believe, for which we have the *Holy Scriptures* for our Direction; which are the most perfect and infallible Standard of Divine Truths: And these again are more briefly summ'd up to our hands in that excellent Form of sound Words, known by the Name of *The Apostles Creed*; which is a compleat System of all the necessary Points of Faith, which we are therefore commanded to hold fast and stick to, as the best Test or Touchstone of sound Doctrine: insomuch that if any teach any Doctrine contrary to it, we are bid not

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to receive, but reject it; yea, if an Angel from Heaven should preach any other Gospel, we are to account him accursed: Gal. 1. 8, 9.

The latter teaches us what we are to do or practise; for which we have *The Decalogue, or Ten Commandments*, which were dictated by God himself, and deliver'd to the Jews by the Hand of *Moses*: and being after corrupted by the Traditions and false Interpretations of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, it was rescu'd by our Saviour from their false Glosses, and refin'd into a more pure and perfect Rule of Life and Manners. There we are directed in our whole Duty both to God and Man; insomuch that there is no Vertue to be follow'd, nor Vice to be shun'd, but is there set forth, back'd with Rewards and Punishments, that are sufficient to invite us to the one, and to deter us from the other.

For the Devotion of the Church, we have *The Lord's Prayer* for our Direction; which being dictated by Him who was best able to teach us, is justly accounted the most absolute and perfect Form of Prayer that was ever given to Mankind, and is therefore to be us'd not only as a Form in the same Words, but as a Pattern and Platform for all our other Prayers; being a brief Summary of all things that are agreeable to the Will of God, and suitable to all our Wants and Necessities. In a word, we are thereby fully instructed in all things that we are to pray for, in relation to God, our Neighbour, and our selves, with an Assurance of being heard by the Merits and Mediation of Christ; who by the many Miracles and wonderful Works that he did, plainly shew'd himself to be a Teacher come from God, and that what he deliver'd were the Words of Eternal Life.

This is the good Seed of sound Doctrine and Devotion, which Christ began, and his Ministers still continue to sow in the Field of his Church, and is, by the Blessing of God, plentifully sown among us; which, if it take root in the Hearts of the Hearers, is enough to make them fruitful in every good Word and Work.

For the Discipline of the Church: He hath taken care to enclose and fence his Field, where this good Seed is sown, with the Hedg of a good Government, to promote its Growth, and likewise to guard it against the bold Inroads of the wild Boar of the Forest, and the secret Underminings of the little Foxes. When Christ was upon Earth, he gather'd and govern'd his Church himself; but when he ascended up to Heaven, he left the Care of it to his Apostles, giving them Authority

thority over the other Disciples, to rule and instruct all his Followers, endowing them with Power from on high to that end, and saying, *As my Father sent me, so send I you.* And to preserve a Succession of Rulers and Teachers in it to the World's End, he gave a Commission to them to ordain others, promising to *be with them to the End of the World.*

This Holy Discipline (thanks be to God) is deriv'd down to us to this day, by a constant Succession of Bishops and Pastors, *to set in order the things that are wanting, and to ordain Elders in every City:* which Holy Discipline God long preserve and continue to us, even *as long as the Sun and Moon endureth.* Then,

Lastly, For the Communion of the Church: He hath added the heavenly Seed of the Holy Eucharist; for in the Night in which he was betray'd, he took Bread and brake it, and likewise took the Cup and blessed it, and then gave both to his Disciples to eat and drink of it, saying, *Do this in Remembrance of me:* by which he instituted the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a Memorial of his Death, and as a Bond of Love and Unity among Christians; willing them to meet together at his Table as his Children, and to feast together as Brethren, that they might the better live together in Love and Unity.

This Communion of Saints is likewise, by the Blessing of God, still continu'd to us; by which we remember the Love of our Saviour in that Feast of Charity, as a Means to unite our Affections to him and one another; and may we all continue to do so till his Coming again.

This is, in short, the good Seed of sound Doctrine, a well-order'd Discipline, a pious Devotion, and a holy Communion, which Christ the great Husbandman hath sowed in the Field of his Church; all which may abundantly convince us of the great Care he hath taken of it: so that we may, with the Prophet *Isaiab*, bring in God Almighty speaking to us, as he did to the Jews of old; *My Beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill; he fenced it, gather'd out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest Vine; he built a Tower in the midst of it, and also made a Wine-press therein: And now (saith he) judg, I pray you, between me and my Vineyard; what could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Isa. 5. 1, 2, &c. The same may Christ say concerning his Church; he hath sowed it with the best Seed, he hath fenced it with the best Government, he hath appointed Overseers to preserve the Order, and promote the Edification of it: and

and what could he have done more for his Church, which he hath not done to it?

And now might not good Fruit be reasonably expected from both, after all this Care? But what follow'd hereupon? Why, the Vineyard, when the Husbandman look'd for Grapes, brought forth nothing but wild Grapes, such as might justly set his Teeth on edg against it; for it yielded *Oppression instead of Judgment*, and a *Cry instead of Righteousness*, as we read in that Chapter of *Isaiah*. So likewise in the Field where the Householder had sown good Corn, there sprung up with it Tares, Cockle and Darnel to choak and suppress it. And this leads me to the

Second Thing propounded, viz. the unhapyy Rise of Errors, Heresies and Divisions in the Church, notwithstanding all this Care. This is imply'd in the next Question, *From whence then hath it Tares?* which supposes the Growth of them, and is in the foregoing Verse expressly affirm'd, that *when the Wheat sprang up, the Tares also appear'd with it*: Which gives us to understand, that Errors, Heresies and Schisms will arise and mingle with the good Seed in the Church of Christ.

Now as the good Seed related to the Doctrine, Discipline and Communion of the Church; so the Corruption or Deviation from these are the Tares here mention'd: such as Errors in Matters of Faith, Corruption in Manners, Decays in Discipline, Divisions in Communion, and the like: of the Growth of which, as the History of former Times, so our own sad Experience may abundantly testify.

This bad Fruit soon sprung up in the early Days of Christianity; for quickly after Christ's Appearance, there appear'd *false Christs, and false Prophets*, that arose and deceiv'd many. Our Saviour gave timely notice hereof to his Disciples, saying, *Beware of false Prophets, that come to you in Sheep's Clothing, that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, but inwardly are ravening Wolves*; seeking to divide, the more easily to devour: *Mat. 7. 15.* A little after he farther warns them, that *many would come in his Name, saying, Lo! here is Christ, and lo there*; adding this Advice, *Believe them not, and go not after them*; *Mat. 24. 5, 23.* St Paul likewise foretold these things: *I know (saith he) that after my Departure grievous Wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the Flock; and of your own selves shall Men arise, speaking perverse things to draw Disciples after them*: *Acts 20. 29, 30.* When Christ, the great Shepherd, had gather'd

ther'd his Sheep into one Flock, and united them in one Fold, there soon arose false Teachers to scatter and divide them, corrupting the Doctrine of the Gospel, and instilling the Poison of Errors and Divisions. Of this kind was *Simon Magus*, who appear'd in the Apostles time, and other Hereticks that arose after, corrupting the Faith, and disturbing the Peace of the Church; by whose means many were carry'd about with divers and strange Doctrines, and drawn aside from the Simplicity of the Gospel.

In the Church of *Corinth* we read of many Schisms and Factions; one saying, *I am of Paul*; another, *I am of Apollo*; a third, *I am of Cephas*; a fourth, *I am of Christ*: as if Christ was divided, and his Disciples must be so too. In the Epistle to *Timothy*, we are told of some that crept into Houses, leading captive silly Women, laden with divers Lusts, turning away their Ears from the Truth, and turning them unto Fables; 2 Tim. 3. 6. St. Peter makes mention of false Teachers, that brought in damnable Heresies, denying the Lord that bought them; and many (saith he) shall follow their pernicious Ways, by reason of whom the Way of Truth shall be evil spoken of: 2 Pet. 2. 1, 2.

These were the Tares that sprung up in the Days of the Apostles, which have since encreas'd unto more Ungodliness: Some in our Days denying the God that made them, as the *Atheists*, that cast off all Religion: Others denying the Lord that bought them, as the *Deists*, that reject all Divine Revelation: Others again denying the Church that receiv'd them, as *Sectaries and Separatists*, who destroy all Discipline and Order; and by a Parity of Pastors introduce endless Strife and Confusion.

Tares then, we see, will grow up among the good Corn in the Christian Church: yea, the Apostle makes them in a manner necessary for a Test or Trial of our Sincerity; *There must be Heresies* (saith he) *that they who are approved may be made manifest*; 1 Cor. 11. 19. So that these things are permitted in the Church to distinguish the Good from the Bad; for by them the Children of the Kingdom will at the last Day be known from the Children of the Wicked one, as the Wheat will be separated from the Chaff at the Harvest.

But tho these things must and will come, yet the Question still returns, *From whence then hath it Tares?* The Answer whereunto will bring me to the

Third

Third Thing propounded; which is the Author or Sower of them, in these words, An Enemy hath done this. Now this Enemy our Saviour himself expounded to be the Devil, or the Children of the Wicked one; who make it their Business to hinder the Efficacy of Christ's Doctrine, and to frustrate the whole Design of Man's Redemption.

'Twas an old Observation, that *where God hath a Church, the Devil will have a Chappel*; and where the former sows his good Seed, the latter is ever ready to plant his Tares. Hence Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, and the like, are by the Apostle reckon'd among the *Works of the Flesh*, and the *Wiles of the Devil*; Gal. 5. 20. Eph. 6. 11. God is the *Author of Truth*, and the *Lover of Concord*, as the Devil is the *Father of Lyes*, and the *Fomenter of Discord*: And as Unity and sound Doctrine are the Marks and Ornaments of Christ's Church, so Errors and Divisions are the Badges and Blemishes of the Conventicle; which shews the one to be the *Temple of God*, and the other the *Synagogue of Satan*. But how does the Devil plant these Tares? or by what means does this Enemy of Mankind cause these Errors and Divisions in the Church? Why, this is done partly by the Instigations of Satan himself, and partly by the Temptations of his Emissaries and evil Instruments: both which, by working upon the Ignorance of some, the Supineness of others, and the Pride and corrupt Designs of most, draw them from the Ways of Truth and Peace, into the By-Paths of Error and Delusion.

As for Ignorance, that is much more the Mother of Division than Devotion; for Satan is said to *blind the Minds of them that believe not*: and Seducers are said to deceive the Hearts of the Simple, and to make Merchandize of weak and unstable Souls. Again,

They take advantage of the Supineness and Negligence of others; 'twas while Men slept that the Enemy sowed his Tares: and if Satan can lull Men into a carnal and fatal Security, he hath then his Opportunity both of deceiving and destroying them. Moreover,

These evil Instruments work upon the Pride and Ambition of others; for where they find Men big of themselves, and to swell with Vanity and Self-conceit, they sooth and humour them by making them Heads of Parties, and flattering them with vain Conceits of their greater Knowledg and Sanctity; and being thus lifted up, they soon fall into the Snare and Temptation of the Devil. Furthermore,

They

They work upon the Envy, Malice and Ill-nature of others, which are Passions truly diabolical, and lead Men into Sedition and Diffension; for when the Fire is once kindled in their own Breasts, they then disturb and inflame all that are about them. Once more,

They work upon Mens Avarice and greedy Desires after worldly Interest, drawing them into Sects by the Baits of Profit and Advantage; and so by making *Gain their Godliness*, serve Mammon more than God. In short, St. James makes *Wars and Fightings, Strifes and Diffension*, to proceed from *Mens Lusts that war in their Members*, Jam. 4. 1. And St. Paul told the *Corinthians*, that whilst there were *Envyings, Strife and Divisions among them*, they were carnal, and walked as Men; that is, not like Christians mov'd by the *Holy Spirit of God*, but like Men acted by that *evil Spirit*, that rules in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience. By which it appears, that 'tis Satan, the grand Enemy of Christ and his Church, that plants these Tares in it; that Hereticks and Schismatics are Satan's Tools and Emissaries for this purpose; who, like the Devil's Husbandmen, sow the Seeds of Discord and Diffension in the Christian Church; and that the Hearts of ignorant, proud, factious and envious Persons are the Soil prepar'd to receive them.

But what is to be done with these Tares? Why, that the Servants ask'd the Householder in the next words; *They said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?* to which he answer'd, *Nay, lest while ye gather up the Tares, ye root up also the Wheat with them.* The Hypocrite is not easily discern'd here from the sincere Christian; there are those Disguises oftentimes put upon the Face of Error and Vice, that makes them look like Truth and Vertue; and being so hardly distinguish'd, we may hurt the Good, by an unseasonable Severity against the Bad. *Let both therefore grow together until the Harvest*, saith the Householder, *and in the time of Harvest I will say to the Reapers, Gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barns:* meaning, that a time is coming, when Truth shall be distinguish'd from Error, and a Separation made between good Men and bad; and that will be at the End of the World, or the Day of Judgment, when the Angels, who are the Reapers, will be bid to gather the Wheat into the Barn; that is, to translate good Christians into the Joys of Heaven, and burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire; that is, to doom evil Men and Seducers to the Miseries
and

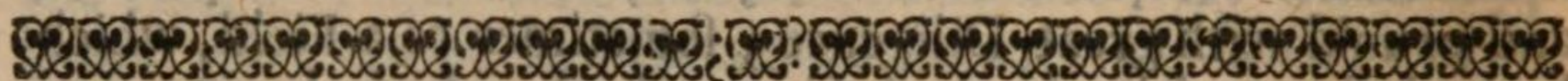
and Torments of Hell. Thus we see the Drift and Design of this Parable: From which we may learn,

1st, The infinite Love and tender Care of our Saviour toward his Church, in sowing it with the good Seed of sound Doctrine, Discipline and Devotion: He hath not left it as a neglected Garden or Common, to be over-run with Weeds and Briars, but hath planted it with the choicest Fruit, and hath set able and faithful Workmen in it to manure and cultivate it; so that by receiving the Holy Word and Doctrine deliver'd in it, we may be *built up in our most Holy Faith*, and be *made wise unto Salvation*.

2^{dly}, We may learn hence to bring forth Fruit answerable to all this Care and Kindness. The Church of Christ, we see, is sometimes compar'd to a Vineyard, which he hath planted and prun'd with great Diligence; sometimes to a Field, which he hath sown with the best Corn: both which having water'd with the Dews and Blessings of Heaven, he may reasonably look for good Grapes from the one, and good Corn from the other; and that his Pains should be answer'd with a suitable Increase from both: *for who planteth a Vineyard, and eateth not of the Fruits thereof? and who soweth, but in hopes of reaping?* What these Fruits are, the Apostle tells us, *Gal. 5. 22, 23. Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, &c. If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall not be barren or unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Hereby we shall adorn our Profession, and at once answer the End, and obtain the Reward of it; whereas Barrenness and Unfruitfulness under the Means of Grace, is the ready way to lose and be depriv'd of them: *for every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire.*

3^{dly}, We learn hence the Vigilance of Satan and his Emisaries to disturb and destroy the Church; how they watch all Opportunities, and seek all Advantages to that end: The Enemies are awake to sow their Tares, while others are asleep, who should watch and hinder them; the Vigilance of the one getting ground by the Negligence of the other: which should awaken and stir up the Sons and Lovers of the Church, to be at least as zealously affected in a good Cause, as they are in a bad; lest with the lukewarm Persons in the Church of *Laodicea*, for being neither hot nor cold, we are spu'd out of his Mouth.

4thly, From the Church's having in it both good Seed and bad, and Divine Truths being mingled and blended with many Errors, let us learn to discern and distinguish between the one and the other. Our Saviour hath given us a Mark of Distinction to discern them by, *By their Fruits ye shall know them*: The Doctrines that lead to Peace and Holiness, are the Gold, Silver, and precious Stone, built upon the Foundation of Christianity, that can abide the Trial, and will obtain a Reward; whereas they that tend to Strife and Dissension, are the Wood, Hay, and Stubble that will be consum'd at the Last Day, and suffer Loss. And having thus try'd all things, let us, in the last place, hold fast that which is good, and that will surely bring us to Peace and Happiness at the last; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXIII.

The EPISTLE for the Sixth Sunday after the *Epiphany*.

1 John iii. 1—9.

Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be call'd the Sons of God! Therefore the World knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches God, whose blessed Son was manifested to destroy the Works of the Devil, and to make us the Sons of God and Heirs of eternal Life, to grant to us, that having this Hope, we may purify our selves, even as he is pure; that when he shall appear again with Power and great Glory, we may be like unto him in his eternal and glorious Kingdom. All which Expressions and Petitions being taken out of the Epistle for this Day, 'twill be requisite to consider and explain them in Order. And,

First,

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First, The Epistle begins with Wonder and Astonishment at the Greatness of the Divine Love, in taking us into the near Relation of Sons or Children; *Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath bestow'd upon us, that we should be call'd the Sons of God!* The Term *Behold*, prefix'd in the Front, betokens in Scripture something of great Excellency, and likewise of great Strangeness and Difficulty to come after it, such as is apt to occasion Wonder, and raise Admiration; so St. *John* usher'd our Saviour into the World, with *Ecce! Behold the Lamb of God!* &c. and the Apostle here expresses the exceeding great Strangeness of God's Love towards us, by saying, *Behold, what manner of Love is this that the Father hath bestow'd upon us!* The great Token here instanc'd in of this Divine Favour, is our being made or call'd the *Sons of God*, and thereby Heirs of eternal Life; which are not two distinct, but one and the same Privilege, the latter being a necessary Consequent of the former. Now the wonderful and astonishing Greatness of this Love lies in this, that we who had forfeited all Title to Sonship by the first Disobedience, and so became the Servants of Sin and Satan, and thereby Heirs of Damnation, should be again restor'd to the Privileges of Sons and Children, and so intitled to an everlasting Inheritance; that we who had so highly incens'd and provok'd him, should yet be receiv'd into Favour again, and from Aliens and Outcasts, be taken into the number of his Children: In a word, that the great and infinite Majesty of Heaven should condescend so low, as to take the worthless and rebellious Sons of *Adam* into so near and dear a Relation to himself.

But how are we call'd the Sons of God? Why, not by Creation only, for so all Creatures, animate and inanimate, may be stil'd, as all proceeding from him, but by Adoption and Regeneration. Adoption (you know) is the receiving or engrafting a Stranger into another's Stock or Family, and allowing him all the Favours and Privileges of a natural-born Child. In like manner God Almighty vouchsafes to admit us that were Strangers into his Family, and to call us to the Adoption of Sons. *As many as receiv'd him* (saith St. *John*) *to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believe on his Name:* John 1.12. By this means, we that were afar off, Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ; and from Enemies and Foreigners, are become Fellow-Citizens

with the Saints, and of the Household of God; Eph. 2. 12, 13, 19. And all this not for any Merit, or at any Entreaty of ours, but merely of his own good Will and Pleasure, having *predestinated us to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his Will*; Eph. 1. 5, 6.

Again, we are the Sons of God by spiritual Regeneration; and this is done in our Baptism, wherein we are *born again of Water and the Holy Ghost*, and thereby from Children of Wrath are made the Children of Grace, and so *begotten again to a lively Hope of Glory*. This is in short *the Love of God*, which St. John here cannot speak of without Wonder and Amazement, having his Heart warm'd, and his Affections rais'd at the Remembrance of it.

And yet this inestimable Love and Privilege bestow'd upon us by God, cannot secure us here from the Hatred and Malice of Men; for St. John makes this the very reason of their Enmity to and ill Usage of us: *Therefore* (saith he, in the next words) *the World knoweth us not, because it knew him not*; that is, the World doth malign and hate us as a People contrary to them, having other Relations, and other kind of Hopes than they; for they depend wholly upon the World, and we upon God. And this is the Foundation of their Hatred and Contempt of us, for they know us not, because they knew him not; *Marvel not* (saith Christ) *if the World hate you, for it hated me before it hated you*: And if the only-begotten Son of God was crucify'd by them that knew not what they did, what wonder is it if the adopted Sons of God be persecuted by them that know not their Relation to him?

However, this will not diminish, but rather increase our Happiness; so the following words tell us, *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be*; that is, whatever Troubles or Persecutions we may meet with here, our State and Condition at present is that of the Sons and Children of God, which may assure us of his Care and Protection. But what we shall be hereafter, or what that Inheritance is that shall be hereafter settled upon us as Sons of God, is not yet fully reveal'd, and cannot at present be fully comprehended by us; *but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*: that is, this we may be assur'd of, that when that blessed time of his Appearance shall come, we, as Sons of God, shall resemble our heavenly Father, as
Children

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Children are wont to resemble the Face and Features of their Parents : We shall be like him in Grace and Holiness, and like him in Glory and Happiness ; and this will consist in such a full and transporting sight of him, as will transform us into the same Image from Glory to Glory : for *we shall see him as he is, and shall know him even as we are known.*

But what Effect hath the Expectation of these things upon us? Why, that the next words will declare, *And every Man that bath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* Where we are to consider the Nature and Effect of a Christian's Hope, together with the Pattern or Platform by which it is to act. As for the Nature of a Christian's Hope, that, as appears by what goes before, may be defin'd to be a comfortable and well-grounded Expectation of future Bliss and Glory. I stile it,

1st, An Expectation, for that is always included in Hope, and evermore goes before Fruition. That which we have, or are possess'd of, is not the Object of Hope, but Enjoyment ; for *Hope that is seen* (saith the Apostle) *is not Hope ; for what a Man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with Patience wait for it ;* Rom. 8. 24, 25.

2^{ly}, I stile it a comfortable Expectation, in opposition to that fearful Expectation of Wrath mention'd by the Apostle, *Heb. 10. 27.* Hope is attended with some kind of Comfort and Delight, and is therefore always fix'd upon something that is either really or apparently good ; for that which is apprehended as evil or hurtful, evermore creates Fear, and not Hope : and therefore I stile it,

3^{ly}, A well-grounded Expectation ; for Hope that is not well-grounded is not Hope, but Presumption, and evermore endeth in Disappointment and Despair. Now the Grounds of a Christian's Hope are founded upon the Promises of God, and performing the Conditions annex'd to them, by observing whereof our Hope hath a good bottom to rely upon, but without it none.

Lastly, I stile it an Expectation of future Bliss and Glory. Hope always supposes the Absence of the thing hop'd for, and the Object of it is still something that is future ; for things present and in possession, are (as was before observ'd) the Objects of Joy and Enjoyment, not of Hope, which is always carry'd out in longing Desires after things absent and to come. And the greater the things we desire

and look for are, the better must the Hope and Expectation of them be; and consequently our Expectation being of future Bliss and Glory, consisting in the Vision and Enjoyment of God, which Christ hath promis'd to all his faithful Followers, the Christian's Hope is founded on the best Grounds, and fix'd on the highest and noblest Objects. This is briefly the Nature and Object of a Christian Hope.

But what Effect hath it upon good Christians? Why, *Every one that hath this Hope purifieth himself*; that is, it sets them upon qualifying themselves by Purity of Heart and Life for the Blessedness they hope for. To purify supposes Pollution, and signifies the cleansing or washing it away; 'tis a figurative Expression taken chiefly from the Goldsmith or Refiner, who by melting Silver or other Metal in the Fire, purifies and refines it from all its Dross. To this the Psalmist alludes, in saying, *The Words of the Lord are pure Words, even as the Silver which in the Furnace is tried and purified seven times in the Fire*; Psal. 12. 6. Hence he promis'd the House of Israel, to *purge away their Dross, and to take away all their Tin*; Isa. 1. 25. that is, to refine them from the Dregs of corrupt Nature, and to take away the Guilt and Stain of all their Impurities. The Prophet *Malachi* foretold of the Messiah, that he should *come as the Refiners Fire and as Fullers Soap, to purify the Sons of Levi, and to purge them as Gold and Silver, to offer to the Lord a Sacrifice in Righteousness*; Mal. 3. 2, 3. Accordingly, Christ is said to give himself to redeem us from all Iniquity, and *to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*; Tit. 2. 14. And here the Hope that a Christian hath in him, is said to put him upon purifying himself; that is, the purging away the Corruption of his Nature, and advancing it as far as he can to the highest pitch of Purity and Perfection.

Now to purify himself, here implies the Purity both of Heart and Life. The former consists in the Singleness and Sincerity of the Heart, in the Purity and Simplicity of the Intention, without any mixture of Guile or Hypocrisy, Fraud or Double-dealing; doing all things with an honest and upright Mind, free from all evil and corrupt Designs. To this we are call'd by St. James, Chap. 4. 8. *Cleanse your hands, ye Sinners; and purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded.* And they that do so, are by our Saviour pronounc'd blessed, *Mat. 5. 8. Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*

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The latter, *viz.* Purity of Life, consists in the Innocence of our Behaviour, or the Integrity of our Words and Actions, abstaining from all the Impurities of sensual Lusts, and *possessing our Vessels in Sanctification and Honour, not in the Lusts of Concupiscence, like the Gentiles that know not God.* To this a Christian's Hope of everlasting Life strongly obliges, as appears by that of the Apostle, *2 Cor. 7. 1. Having these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* Being receiv'd by Christ as Children in his Family, and looking for an Inheritance immortal, undefiled, reserv'd in Heaven for us; we are now to purify our selves from the Pollutions of the Flesh, and to keep our selves unspotted from the World. But,

What Influence hath this Hope upon Mens purifying themselves? Why, it hath a double Influence, the one of Congruity, the other of Necessity. As for that of Congruity, nothing can be more fit and decent than that they who expect such great things, should qualify themselves for them, and suit their Lives and Actions accordingly. We are the Children of God already, and we know not what higher things are kept in store for us; and what can be more proper and becoming, than to imitate our heavenly Father, and to fit our selves for his Favour? All that we know of our future Happiness, is, that *we shall be like God, and shall see him as he is:* and is it not highly reasonable and decent, that we seek to repair that Image of God in us, into which we hope to be transform'd; and to elevate and prepare the Eyes of our Soul for such a glorious and beatifick Vision? This is the proper and natural Effect of such a comfortable Expectation; and it must be very indecent and improper for any that hath these Hopes to do otherwise. This is intimated in that Advice of the Apostle, *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are honest and of good report; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praise, think on these things.*

But beside the Congruity and Decency of the thing, there is also an absolute Necessity of it, in order to the attaining the things hoped for; for *without Holiness no Man can or shall see the Lord.* 'Tis only the pure in Heart that are capable of seeing God: He is of purer eyes than to behold Iniquity, or to be beheld by it; and therefore our Eyes must be clarify'd and prepar'd for such a Sight, before it can behold that Mirror of Purity and Perfection. Hea-

ven is the Region of pure and undefiled Light, where no Pollution or Defilement enters; and therefore 'tis impossible for a wicked Man to arrive or abide there, or if he could, without purifying and changing his Nature, Heaven would be rather a Torment than a Happiness to him: for how can they be happy in the sight of God, whom they never loved, and whose Fear they always cast from before their eyes? What Happiness can the Worldling find in Heaven, where all the things he ever loved or sought after, will be for ever remov'd from him; and instead of them, will be entertain'd only with Goods, which he neither understands nor values? What pleasure can the voluptuous Person take in Heaven, where all the sensual Delights that ever pleas'd him will be at an end; and instead of them, he will find there no other Pleasures, but such of which he hath no relish or desire? How can the ambitious and vain-glorious Man be happy in Heaven, when all the Honours he ever courted are laid in the dust, and where no other Glories remain, but such to which his Aversion is much greater than his Ambition? By all which it appears, that every one that hath this truly Christian Hope, must and will purify himself to be qualify'd to receive it.

But by what Pattern or Platform are they to purify themselves? Why, 'tis *even as he is pure*; that is, to be holy as he that hath call'd us is holy, to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, and to walk even as Christ walk'd: not that we are to come up to the same degrees of Purity and Perfection with him, or to keep pace with him in the untraceable Steps of his exalted Holiness; but to become as like him, and to follow him as near as we can. Thus every one that hopes to be like him in Glory, must be like him in Grace here; and to see him as he is, we must be as he is, endeavouring to conform ourselves to his Image, and to purify ourselves by the Example of his Purity.

This the Apostle goes on to confirm in the following Verses, from the Nature of Sin, and its Contrariety to the Law and Will of God; for *whosoever committeth Sin* (saith he) *transgresseth also the Law, for Sin is the Transgression of the Law*, and consequently directly opposite to that blisful State of Happiness we hope for, which is a pure and sinless State, and so inconsistent with the Love and deliberate Commission of any Sin. *And ye know* (as he goes on) *that Christ was manifested to take away our Sins; and in him is no Sin.*

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Sin : meaning, that our blessed Saviour, who was free from all Sin, came into the World to take away our Sins, by shedding his Blood to purge out our Corruption, and by shedding abroad his Grace into our Hearts to purify our Nature, and thereby fit us for this future State of Bliss and Purity. *Whosoever therefore abideth in him* (saith he) *sinneeth not* : he that is united to him by a sound Faith and lively Hope, does not wilfully or deliberately sin against him, much less does he give himself over to it, or take any pleasure or delight in it. For *whosoever* thus wilfully *sinneeth*, *hath not seen him, neither known him* ; that is, he is not capable of seeing God, or of ever attaining any saving Knowledg of him.

From hence the Apostle proceeds to caution weaker Christians against being impos'd upon by false Teachers, and to labour for a right Understanding in these matters : *Little Children* (saith he) *let no Man deceive you, he that doth Righteousness is righteous, even as as he is righteous.* He that acts righteously, according to the Precept and Example set before him, will alone appear righteous before God. 'Tis not a specious Show, or a good Meaning only, that will do us any Service, but the doing Acts of Righteousness and Good Works that will recommend us to God, and be rewarded by him. He that committeth Sin willingly and deliberately, *is of the Devil* ; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. Such a one is so far from being a Child of God, or in the number of his Sons, that he is of his Father the Devil, who was a Lyar from the beginning, and the Father of them. *And for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil.* The End of Christ's coming was to root out all Sin and Wickedness ; such as Pride, Lying, Slandering, Backbiting, Tale-bearing, with all drawing and enticing any to Sin, which are more especially the Works of the Devil, and render Men most like unto him ; as also to plant all kinds of Vertue and Holiness, which make us like unto God, and fit us for the Vision and Enjoyment of him.

This is briefly the Sense and Sum of this Day's Epistle ; which may teach us,

1st, To admire and adore the infinite Love and Goodness of God in making us his Sons, and taking us into so near and dear a Relation to himself. This *St. John* here could not speak of without Extasy and Amazement ; *Behold !*
what

what manner of Love is this, what unparallel'd, what unspeakable, what undeserv'd Love is this, that we should be call'd the Sons of God! And St. Paul elsewhere like one in a Rapture cries out, *O the Height and Depth, and Length and Breadth of this Love of God, that passeth Knowledge!* Eph. 3. 18.

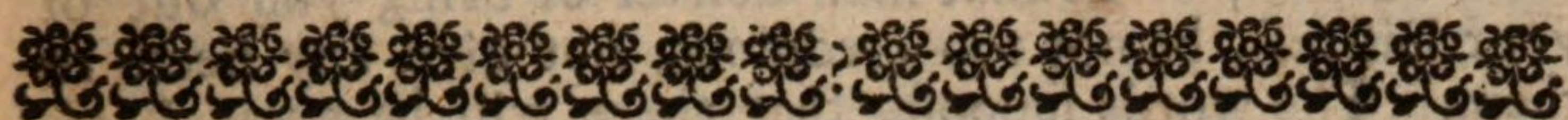
2dly, Let the Apprehension hereof beget in us a lively Hope of the far greater Bliss and Happiness that will follow after it; for we cannot now take the full dimensions of this great Privilege, nor know the bottom or farther end of it. At present let us fill our Minds with well-grounded Hopes, and rest assured of the full and speedy Accomplishment of them.

3dly, Let this Hope teach us to purify our selves, even as he is pure, that we may be meet to be receiv'd into the undefiled Regions: let us endeavour to be like God, that we may be fit to enjoy him; for we may as well hope to see without Light, as to behold the Face of God without Holiness. 'Tis Grace only that qualifies for Glory, and Purity for Perfection. To attain which, let us,

4thly, Beware of committing any wilful and deliberate Sin, against the Light of God's Laws, and the Dictates of our own Conscience; for that will forfeit this high Privilege, and make us the Children of the Devil, and not the Sons of God.

Lastly, Let us abandon all the Works of the Devil, which Christ came to destroy; and pray for all those Fruits of the Spirit that he came to plant in us: so shall we that are now Sons be made meet Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XXXIV.

The GOSPEL for the Sixth Sunday after the
Epiphany.

St. Matthew xxiv. 23——31.

Then if any Man shall say unto you, Lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not: for there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders; insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect. Behold! I have told you before, &c.

THE Collect and Epistle for this Day mind us of the two great Ends of Christ's Manifestation in the Flesh, *viz.* the destroying the Works of the Devil, and the making us the Sons of God. Of both which before.

The Gospel for the Day (which is now to be handled) warns us against false Christs, who come on other and contrary Ends, *viz.* The making us Slaves to Satan, and to the doing of his Works.

The Gospel begins with a Caution against these Impostors, in these words; *Then if any Man shall say, Lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not.* Then refers to the Times before-mention'd, to wit, the last Days, the Time of the Messias, which will be Times of great Trouble and Distress; *Nation rising against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom; and there shall be Famines, and Pestilences, and Earthquakes in divers places.* Then is the time for Deceivers and Impostors to appear, who by working upon the Fears and Fancies of People in distress, promising them Deliverance, and doing great things for them, easily beguile and serve their own ends upon them. And therefore *if any Man say unto you, Lo! here is Christ; that is, if any would persuade you in the time of your Trouble, that here*
is

is the Messias, or he that shall deliver or bring you out of your Distress, be not too credulous, nor give any heed to them. The words suppose, that there will be great Divisions and Distractions in mens Minds about the Person and the Place of the Messiah; some saying, This is he that should come for the Redemption of *Israel*; others saying, Nay, but this is he that was promis'd and foretold by the Prophets for that end. And as they were divided about the Person, so were they about the Place too where he should appear; one saying, *Lo! here is Christ*; and another, *there*: some assigning *Bethlehem of Judea* for the Place of his Appearance; others saying, nay, *that is the least among the Hundreds of Judah*, and so too mean a place for the Son of God. Some again assign *Nazareth in Galilee*, but others said, *Can any Good come out of Nazareth?* Thus were Men divided of old concerning the Person and Place of the Messiah, which hath made some since wholly to reject him, and others to fall into wild and different Opinions about him: which occasion'd this Caution in the Text, *If any say, Lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not*: that is, do not hearken to them, or assent to the Truth of what they say, but rather turn the deaf ear to their Doctrine, and be not easily drawn into the Belief of it. St. John gives the same Advice, saying, *Beloved, believe not every Spirit*, 1 John 4. 1. Give no heed to them, and much less yield up your Faith and Reason to them.

The Reason whereof is here added in the next words; *For there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets*. And St. John tells us, that *many false Prophets are already gone out into the World*. So that we are here warn'd against two sorts of Deceivers, viz. *false Christs and false Prophets*. The *false Christs* were those, who took upon them to be the Saviours of the World, or the Persons foretold by the Prophets, that should come for that purpose. Of these our Saviour himself gave notice, in the fifth Verse of this Chapter, saying, *Many shall come in my Name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many*. Not as tho they pretended to be sent by Christ, for so coming in his Name sometimes signifies; but that they would of their own accord assume to themselves the Dignity and Authority of the true Messias. Of this sort there arose many among the Jews; as *Theudas*, and *Judas of Galilee*, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles, Chap. 5. 36, 37. who drew many Disciples after them, and occasion'd their Destruction. Such

Such likewise were *Jonathas, Barchochebas*, and many others, who arrogated to themselves the Honour of Christ, and pretended to come for the Redemption of Mankind.

There was about the tenth Century a certain Jew, call'd *El-David*, who gave out that he was Christ, and drew a great many Profelytes after him, most of whom came to untimely ends. And of late years we have had one *Hacket*, and *Naylor*, both pretending to come from God for the Salvation of Men, till the Discovery of the Cheat expos'd them to condign Punishment.

But beside *false Christs*, here is, 2dly, mention made of *false Prophets*. And these were Persons pretending much to Inspirations, and that they had more and clearer Revelations of the Mind of God made to them, than to other Men. They were stiled sometimes *false Apostles, deceitful Workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ*; 2 Cor. II. 13. Sometimes they are call'd by the Name of *false Teachers*, who by good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple; corrupting the Simplicity of the Gospel, and instilling into mens Minds the Poison of Heresies, Errors, and Divisions. And of this sort of false Prophets too many are gone abroad into the World. In short, when *David George* in *Holland*, and *John of Leyden* in *Munster*, and other pretended Prophets in *Germany*, deceiv'd so many beyond the Seas; and when the Enthusiasms of Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, and other Sectaries, who pretend to pray and preach by the Spirit, have deluded so many in our own Country; 'tis time to hearken to our Saviour's Advice, *Believe them not, and go not after them*.

Which Counsel is the more to be heeded, because 'tis here added of the *false Christs* and *false Prophets*, that they shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect. Satan, to uphold his Kingdom, labour'd to vie Miracles with Christ and his Apostles, whose Designs were to overthrow it; and his Agents, by their Illusions and lying Wonders, seek to take off the Force of all the mighty Works by which the Kingdom of Christ stands confirm'd. The Magicians of old sought to imitate the Miracles of *Moses*, till they saw the Finger of God to outdo and elude all their Enchantments: And Impostors have since try'd the same methods, till they have been forc'd to see and acknowledg their own Impotence.

We

We read of *Simon Magus*, that he boasted himself to be some *Great one*, even a Divine Person; and by his Signs and Sorceries bewitch'd many into a Belief, that he was the *great Power of God*, till overcome by the much greater Miracles of *Philip*, he believ'd in Christ, and pray'd *Peter* to pray for him, Acts 8. 9, 10, 11, 24. After him appear'd *Apollonius Tyaneus*, who by the help of Magick and other Sleights did such strange and wonderful things, as stagger'd the Faith of many concerning the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles. In short, we read of the Coming of Anti-christ, that 'tis with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders; and that the working of Satan, in false Teachers, would be with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness: insomuch (as our Saviour here tells us) that if it were possible, they would deceive the very Elect. The Delusions of Impostors would be so strong and powerful, as to seduce even the select and sincere People of God, and to shake the Constancy of the firmest Christians, if it were possible for any Deceit to work upon them: but these our Saviour keeps by Faith unto Salvation, and tho Satan desires to sift or winnow them as Wheat, yet Christ hath pray'd that their Faith fail not. But as for those that are more liable to be remov'd from him that called them into the Grace of Christ, these like the Reed are shaken with every wind of Doctrine, and easily fall from their own Stedfastness; as we find many after did, who were drawn into many Errors and Heresies, and carry'd about with divers and strange Doctrines. These things Christ foretold to his Disciples; Behold (saith he) I have told you before: all things being present to him, who was, is, and is to come. And this warning he the rather gave them to prevent Surprise, that they should not be startled or shaken when they saw it come to pass; but being forewarn'd, they might be forearm'd, and happily secur'd against the Danger of false Christs, and the Poison of false Prophets.

Having given this general Caution against all sorts of Deceivers, he proceeds to apply it by some particular Inferences drawn from it; saying in the next words, Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the Desert! go not forth; Behold he is in the secret Chambers! believe it not. If any shall bring you the News, that a Deliverer is come in such a desert Place, as *Simon Magus* was said to have gather'd many thousands together in the Wilderness of *Judea*, do not hearken so far to such Rumours, as to go after them; or if others shall say, he is in the secret Chambers
or

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or Meetings of some designing Persons, believe them not, and be not deceiv'd with such Fallacies. In like manner, if any shall say, Behold, he is in the Conclave of Catholicks, or in the Conventicles of Sectaries! be not misled by either, nor follow such vain Pretenders.

For as the Lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be: that is, as the Lightning cometh suddenly, and flashes from the East even unto the West, its Influence extending to the remotest Places; so will Christ come shortly to discover himself to all the Ends of the Earth: and as the Lightning pierces into the most secret Corners, so will the Son of Man search out the hidden Intrigues of Impostors, and bring to light the secret Counsels and Devices of the Heart. There will be no need then to look for him in desert or secret Places, saying, Lo! here is Christ, or lo! there: for he will become visible and conspicuous to all, to the joy of good Men, and to the terrour of the Bad. But before this great and terrible Day, there will come a sad and sudden Destruction upon Jerusalem, and a great Slaughter among the Jews, which like Lightning would fly from one Corner to another, and destroy in every Place; and this Slaughter would be made by the Roman Army, which would come and take away both their City and Nation.

For wheresoever the Carcase is, there will the Eagles be gathered together. For the better understanding of this difficult Place, and the Connexion of it with the foregoing, 'twill be requisite to note, that the Eagle was the Ensign in the Banners of the Roman Army, of which they had two in every Legion: for which reason, the Roman Eagle is sometimes set to express the whole Army. Now 'tis the known Property of the Eagle, to attend Battles, to smell out Carcases, and to feed on the Slain; according to that of Job, Chap. 39. 29, 30. The Eagle seeketh the Prey, and her Eyes behold afar off; her Young-ones also suck up Blood, and where the Slain are, there is she. The Resemblance then here made use of, consists in this, that as the Eagles or Vultures find out the Carcase, wheresoever it is; so shall the Roman Armies find out the Jews, and make a Prey or Slaughter of them: which was the thing spoken of in the foregoing Verse, viz. that this Judgment should befall the Jews, wheresoever they were. And to this some refer that Prophecy of Moses so long before, Deut. 28. 49. The Lord shall bring a Nation against thee from far, from the Ends of the

the Earth, as swift as the Eagle flieth, a Nation whose Tongue thou shalt not understand. To the same purpose is that of *Hosea, Chap. 8. 1. He shall come as an Eagle against the House of the Lord.* Both which Prophecies are apply'd to this final Destruction of the *Jews* by the *Roman Eagles*; which were gather'd against them at any Distance wherever they were.

Now this Destruction of *Jerusalem* is here and elsewhere made the Prefage or Forerunner of the last Judgement: so the next words import; *Immediately after the Tribulation of those Days, shall the Sun be darken'd, and the Moon shall not give her Light, and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens shall be shaken.* Where immediately after must not be understood presently, as if the Day of Judgment were to follow immediately upon it; but 'tis meant of some short time after, according to that of *St. Peter*, that *one Day with the Lord is as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day.* And therefore we must not reckon the *Lord slack concerning his Promise*, or slow in his Coming, because he doth not come presently; for the Day of the *Lord will come as a Thief in the Night*, 2 *Pet. 3. 8, 9, &c.* I know some understand the darkning of the Sun and Moon here, and the falling of the Stars, in a figurative Sense, as relating only to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; making the Darkning of the Sun to refer to the Ruin of the Temple, and extinguishing the Light thereof; the Moon's not giving her Light, to the Destruction of the City; the falling of the Stars, to the Overthrow of the lesser Cities about it; and the shaking of the Powers of Heaven, to the shaking its Government both Civil and Ecclesiastical. But this being a strain'd Interpretation, others more probably understand these in a literal sense, as the Signs and Forerunners of the great Day of Judgment. So that parallel Place in *St. Luke, Chap. 21. 25, 26.* is generally understood; which being the Gospel for the second Sunday in *Advent*, the Particulars are there more largely explain'd, and thither I refer the Reader,

And proceed to what follows; where 'tis said, that *then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory.* What this Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven is, hath been likewise variously interpreted; some would have it to be a special Prodigy or Comet in the Heavens, which in the form
of

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of a fiery Sword hung over *Jerusalem*, pointing to and portending the Destruction of the City, which the Tribes of the Earth beheld with great Sorrow and Sadness: *St. Luke* expresses it by *Mens Hearts failing them for fear of what was coming upon the Earth*; and *St. John*, by *all the Kindreds of the Earth wailing because of him*. But these things going before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, cannot be this *Sign of the Son of Man*, which relates to something that follow'd after it. And therefore others with greater reason understand it, of some prodigious Changes and Convulsions in the Heavens, presaging the Son of Man's Coming to Judgment: for so the next words declare; *And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory*. Which relate to his coming at the last and great Day, when he shall make the Clouds his Chariot, and come flying upon the Wings of the Wind, attended with all the Powers of Heaven; that is, an innumerable Train of Angels, and appearing in the greatest Splendour and Glory. All which is confirm'd by the following words; *And he shall send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect, from the four Winds, from one end of Heaven to the other*. Which is a brief Description of the Manner of his summoning all the Inhabitants of the Earth to appear before him: the Angels shall be sent as Heralds to proclaim his Coming, and with the loud Sound of a Trumpet shall gather his Elect, and all others, from all the Quarters of the Heavens, to come, hear, and receive their Doom.

This is, in short, a full Account of the Gospel for this Day; from which we may learn several good and useful Lessons. As,

1st, From the Warning here given against false Christs and false Prophets, we may learn to take the good Advice here and elsewhere given us, *Not to believe every Spirit, but to beware of false Prophets and false Teachers, many whereof are gone abroad into the World*. And the rather, because they go about in *Sheeps clothing*; that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, thereby seeking to divide the Flock of Christ, that they may the more easily deceive and devour them. To prevent the being impos'd upon by them, *St. John* directs to try the Spirits, whether they be of God, 1 John 4.1. that is, to bring the Doctrine and Principles of all such Pretenders to the Test of the holy Scriptures, the only

infallible Standard and Measure of Divine Truths. *To the Law and to the Testimony* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*) *if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them*; Isa. 8. 20. I know some would try Doctrines by the Light within them; and others, by the outward Shows and Appearances of Sanctity in the Embracers of them. But both these are false Rules, and mislead many into great Errors and Divisions. But the Word of God is an unerring Rule, *to which we shall do well to take heed, as to a Light shining in a dark Place*. But because all Sects quote Scripture for their Errors, and pretend to have the Word of God on their side, we must remember what St. Peter tells us, that *no Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, 2 Pet. 1. 20. If any shall take upon them to expound Scripture, without any Office, Parts, or Call thereunto, 'tis no wonder if they mistake Error for Truth, and put Darkness for Light: If he that hath weak or bad Eyes will refuse or reject a Guide, 'tis no strange thing if he stumble or fall. The same Apostle tells us, that *the unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction*; 2 Pet. 3. 16. And therefore they are to receive the Instructions of those that are appointed to teach them: 'tis the Priests Lips that preserve Knowledg, and the People are to seek the Law at their Mouth. And if these at any time differ among themselves, they are to be determin'd by the Wisdom and Authority of the Church, which St. Paul stiles, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, 1 Tim. 3. 15. There we are to acquiesce and submit, having no higher or farther Means upon Earth to have recourse to.

2dly, From the sad Fate of *Jerusalem*, by the Destruction both of the City and Temple, we may learn to avoid those heinous and provoking Sins that occasion'd it: God Almighty is not wont to send such wasting Calamities for nothing; nor does he willingly afflict the Children of Men; he is slow to Wrath, and ready to forgive; neither doth he presently suffer his whole Displeasure to arise: 'tis Mens crying Enormities that ripen them for Vengeance, and draw such heavy Judgments upon their Heads. The Sins of *Jerusalem* were obstinate Impenitence and Infidelity, the Abuse of God's Mercies, and a wilful resisting of all the Means of reclaiming them; they would take no Warning, but resolutely withstood all the Methods both of Mercy and Justice: instead of hearkning to God's Messengers, they killed his Prophets, and stoned them that were sent to them.

them. Which made our Saviour lament the Misery they had brought upon themselves, saying, *How often would I have gather'd thee, as a Hen gathers her Chicken under her Wings, and ye would not.* And St. Luke brings him in weeping over the City, and saying, *Oh that thou hadst known in this thy Day, the things that belong'd unto thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* This was the occasion of their Misery, and this will be our Fate too, if we walk in the same Ways; and *except we repent, and turn from our Sins unto God, we shall all likewise perish.*

Lastly, From the Signs and Certainty of an approaching Judgment, let us learn to look and prepare for it; not saying with the wicked Servant, *My Lord delays his Coming,* and so neglecting all Care and Preparation for him; but let us be always upon our Watch, lest he come upon us unawares: let us make our Accounts ready, that we may be able to yield them up with Joy, and not with Grief; so shall we avoid the Doom of slothful, and receive the Reward of good and faithful Servants. Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXV.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday call'd *Septuagesima*,
or the Third Sunday before *Lent*.

I Cor. ix. 24, to the end.

Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize; so run that ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Mastery, is temperate in all things, &c.

THE reason of giving this Sunday the Name of *Septuagesima*, is not *ab ordine numerandi*, as if it were the seventieth Day before *Easter*, for that is not true; but as a Reverend Father conjectures, *à consequentia numerandi*: for the First Sunday in *Lent* being call'd *Quadragesima*, or the fortieth Day from *Easter*, therefore the

Sunday before that being still farther from *Easter*, is call'd *Quinquagesima*, Five being the next Number above Four; and so the Sunday before that *Sexagesima*, and the Sunday before that *Septuagesima*, or the third Sunday before *Lent*, which is this Day. And the same Father tells us, that this and the two next Sundays began the Preparation for the great Fast of *Lent*; that when it came, it might be the more strictly and religiously observ'd.

And therefore the Collect for the Day beseeches Almighty God favourably to hear the Prayers of his People, offer'd up at those solemn Seasons, and likewise mercifully to deliver them from the just Punishments of their Sins, to be confess'd and lamented at that time.

The Epistle for the Day puts us upon the Duties of Penance and Mortification; and to persuade us thereunto, promises a Reward of an everlasting Crown. The Epistle begins, with comparing our Christian Course to a *Race*, wherein tho many *run*, yet few *receive the Prize*; and therefore wills us, *so to run, that we may obtain it*. Indeed a Christian's Life is in Scripture set forth by many Resemblances of this nature: 'tis sometimes called

A Walk, which signifies a progressive and deliberate Motion, or a steady holding on in the Way that we should go. Sometimes,

A Warfare, wherein we are to expect Opposition, and count upon Enemies, whom we are to resist and conquer. Again, 'tis sometimes call'd

A Watch; which puts us still upon our Guard, and requires Vigilance and Circumspection, that we be not surpriz'd or circumvented.

And here 'tis call'd a Race; which betokens a swift and nimble Motion, and wills us to run with Patience and Alacrity the Paths of God's Commandments, that we may receive the Reward annex'd to them.

Now we *know* (saith the Apostle) *that they which run in a Race, run all*: there is a freedom for any to enter upon the Course, and none that will are hinder'd from engaging in it. In like manner, the Christian Course is free for all, and none are debar'd from entering upon it: The Door of Baptism is open to all that will enter by it, and the Church refuses none that come to it. But yet, as in a Race, tho all run, yet one receives the Prize; he that comes first to the Goal wins all, and the rest are disappointed of their Hope: So in this Christian Course, tho many are call'd to the out-

outward Profession of Christianity, and seem to set out well in it, yet few receive the Reward that is promis'd to it. Some begin well, but flag and faulter half way, and they lose the Prize for not holding out to the end. Others finish their Course, but come not time enough to the Goal; and these lose the Prize for coming too late. Others again, transgress the Limits, and run not within the Bounds appointed for the Race; and these lose it by their Folly and Extravagance. And therefore the Apostle here wills all Men *so to run, that they may obtain.* For the better doing whereof, I shall clear these two things:

First, That there is a Prize, which we are all to run for. And,

Secondly, That we ought all so to run, that we may obtain it.

In speaking to which, because the Terms are all Agonistical and Metaphorical, alluding to the Races and other Exercises us'd in the *Olympick Games*, which were frequent among the *Corinthians*, to whom this Epistle was written; 'twill be requisite a little to explain them, as we go, the better to apply them to our Christian Course.

And, *First*, I say, there is a Prize, which we are all to run for. This we know is something of Value set at the end of the Race, to be given to him that comes foremost to it. Thus it was in the *Grecian Games*, to which the Apostle here alludes: and thus it is in our Christian Race, where there is a Reward plac'd at the end of it, to which we are all to aspire to, and make towards. This St. Paul calls, *The Mark, or the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus*; telling us, that he was still pressing forward to attain it, *Phil. 3. 14.* And in his Epistle to *Timothy*, he adds, that at the finishing of his Course, there was laid up for him a *Crown of Righteousness*, which God the righteous Judg would give him at that Day; and not to him only, but to all that love his appearing: *2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.* Where there is an Allusion, not only to the Prize given to the Combatants in the *Olympick Games*; but likewise to the Judg appointed to award the Prize to him, to whom of right it belong'd. Now this Prize is there call'd a *Crown of Righteousness*; and elsewhere, a *Crown of Life*; and more frequently, a *Crown of Glory*, and an exceeding, excessive, and eternal *Weight of Glory*, *2 Cor. 4. 17.* Sometimes, 'tis stil'd a

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Kingdom; and such a one too, as can never be moved; Heb. 12. 28. Sometimes, an *Inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us*; 1 Pet. 1. 4. This is briefly the Prize which we are all to run for, and in the whole Course of our Lives to direct our Aims and Actions to.

And indeed the Glory and Greatness of it is sufficient to quicken our Desires and Endeavours after it. Earthly Crowns and Kingdoms spur Men on with the greatest Courage, and make them despise all Difficulties that lie in the way to them; but a heavenly Crown or Kingdom should move much more, as infinitely exceeding the other both in Dignity and Duration. The Patriarchs of old, by their unwearied Travels and Pilgrimages, shewed plainly that they sought a Kingdom. And all those Worthies in the 11th to the *Hebrews*, had an Eye to this Recompence of Reward in all that they did or suffer'd: yea, we find *Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, endured the Cross for the Glory that was set before him*, and for that was rewarded with a Crown. And the Apostle would have us look up to him, that we may not faint, but run with Patience the Race that is set before us.

But because all Running will not bring us to the Prize, I must proceed, *Secondly*, To shew the Manner of it, how we may run so as to obtain it. The word *so* refers to the Laws and Rules prescrib'd in the Running of Races, which were then publickly known, and necessary to be observ'd by all that would win the Prize. As,

1st, There were certain Bounds or Terms, where they were to begin or set out, and also where they were to stop or end. Again,

2^{dly}, There was a white Line that mark'd out the Path, within which they were to run; to which the Apostle alludes, in saying, that he press'd forward towards the Mark, for the Prize of his High Calling.

3^{dly}, There was a Judg plac'd at the end of the Race, whose Office it was to adjudg the Prize to be given according to these Rules. To which the same Apostle alludes, in saying, that God, the righteous Judg, should give him a Crown of Righteousness at the last Day. So that they were to run by Line or Rule; and if they transgress'd either by unfair starting at first, or by coming short, or by running over, they assuredly miss'd the Prize. Now the
Apostle

Apostle applies these things to our Christian Race, willing us to set out well at first, to move on regularly after, and to hold out to the end. Which things will help us so to run as to obtain : To which end, we must,

1. Begin early, and enter betimes upon a Course of Vertue and Religion. *Solomon* wills us, to *remember our Creator in the Days of our Youth*, and to *bear the Yoke betimes*. He that begins well, sets out to great advantage, and will be mightily enabled and encourag'd to hold on : and therefore the same Wise Man advises, to *train up a Child in the Way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*.

2. To run so as to obtain, we must not only begin well, but move on regularly after ; keeping within the Rules of God's Commandments, and not getting out of the Lines of our Duty to God or Man. The transgressing of these Bounds, puts us out of the safe Paths of Vertue that lead to Life and Salvation, and brings us into the high ways of Sin and Error, that lead to Death and Destruction : The former is that strait Gate and narrow Way, mention'd by our Saviour, which few find or enter ; the latter is that wide Gate and broad Way, which many pass and walk in. To run right then, we must hearken to that Voice, saying, *This is the Way, walk in it, without turning to the Right Hand or to the Left*, so shall we find Rest to our Souls ; and by ordering our Conversation aright, we shall see the Salvation of God.

3. To run so as to obtain the Prize, we must hold out to the end of the Race ; for he that faints or flags by the Way, can never reach to it. *Be faithful unto Death* (saith our Saviour) *and I will give thee the Crown of Life*. And the Apostle to the same purpose, *We shall certainly reap, if we faint not ; for they who by patient continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory, shall in the end find Eternal Life*. And therefore the same Apostle advises us, to be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord* ; and then we shall find, that *our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord*.

These are the Rules prescrib'd for running our Christian Race, that we may receive the Prize set at the end of it. In order to which, 'twill be requisite to add, that we must run as swiftly, as lightly, and as chearfully as we can.

For the 1st, Nimbleness you know is mainly necessary in a Race, where he that runs fastest, and comes soonest to the Goal, is sure to win the Prize : Swiftnefs in a Race, like Strength in a Battle, gives the surest hopes of the Re-

ward in both: For tho *Solomon* tells us, *the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*; yet that is only when God, for some Reasons, thinks fit to interpose and hinder: otherwise, these are the ordinary Means of Success and Victory in both. He that moves on slowly and heavily in either, necessarily falls short, and seldom or never attains his End. And therefore the Psalmist declares, *I made haste, and delayed not the time to keep thy Commandments*; willing us to run swiftly the Paths of his Precepts. *St. James* calls upon us to *be swift to hear*, and ready to receive God's Word, and to move on nimbly in his Ways. To this end,

2dly, We must run as lightly as we can; that is, as free from all Clogs and Encumbrances of Sin and the World, as is possible; for these hinder both the Swiftness and the Success of our Motion: And therefore we find the antient Racers were wont to put off their Clothes, and strip themselves of all Encumbrances that might retard their Motion. To this the Apostle alludes, *Heb. 12. 1. Being compass'd about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with Patience the Race that is set before us.* Where we are bid to imitate our Forerunners in the Faith, who laid aside every Weight that might clog their Activity, and made themselves as light as they could, the better to facilitate and quicken their Motion: By whose Example, we are to cast off all Burdens of worldly Cares, Affections, and Desires, that may hinder our flight to Heaven; but especially, we must rid our Hearts of all love of Vice and Wickedness, and of that Sin particularly, to which we are most inclin'd, and is most apt to prevail upon us; call'd, *the Sin that doth so easily beset us*; because 'tis still hanging about us, and either stops or turns us out of our way: These we are to lay aside, that we may run the more lightly and nimbly in our Christian Race.

Again, 3dly, To run so as to obtain, we must move on chearfully in it, saying, with the Psalmist, *I delight to do thy Will, O God; yea, thy Law is within my Heart.* Sad and dejected Spirits will dull our Motion, and not suffer us to run fast enough to get the Prize; 'tis the lively and chearful Heart that quickens our Pace, and procures for us the promis'd Reward: and therefore *St. Paul* wills us, to *rejoice in the Lord always*; and lest our Spirits should sink, repeats it, *And again, I say, rejoice.* A lively and light-
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Some Spirit will help us to go on and finish our Course with Joy, and make us rejoice as a Giant to run our Course; which will be the best means to help us to persevere and hold out to the End, and that will surely entitle and bring us to the Prize.

But beside this Metaphor of a Race, which we have insisted on, the Apostle, in the following part of the Epistle, compares a Christian Life to those other Exercises of Wrestling, Fighting, Fencing, Leaping, and the like, which were us'd among the *Corinthians* in the *Olympick Games*: and they that undertook or engag'd in them, are here said to *strive for the Mastery*; which was the End of all that enter'd the Circle or Amphitheater in those Sports.

Now to these the Holy Scriptures frequently allude, in describing our Christian Course. In allusion to their Wrestling, we are said to *wrestle not with Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities and Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, and against spiritual Wickednesses in High Places*; Ephes. 6. 12. And elsewhere, we wrestle with our Adversary the Devil, and against the Power and Force of all his Temptations.

In allusion to their Fightings, we are bid *to fight the good Fight of Faith*, and to struggle with all the Allurements of the World.

In allusion to their Fencings, we are exhorted to *wield the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*; to *put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil*; *having our Loins girt with Truth, and having on the Breast-Plate of Righteousness*: *taking to our selves the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation*, to defend us against all the Assaults of our Enemies.

Lastly, In allusion to their Leaping, we are said to leap for Joy, in singing and praising God. All which Expressions relate to those known Exercises and Games that were us'd among them.

Now in these Exercises, wherein Men strove to excel and to get the Mastery, there were certain Rules to be observ'd; partly to fit them for them, and partly to obtain the Reward annex'd to them, the observing whereof is by St. Paul itil'd, *the striving lawfully*; telling us in 2 Tim. 2. 5. that *if a Man strive for Masteries, yet he is not crown'd except he strive lawfully*; that is, unless he keep to the Laws and Rules prescrib'd in those Exercises.

One of these Rules we have in the Verse immediately foregoing; *No Man that warreth, entangleth himself with the Affairs of this Life*: that is, with other Affairs and Employments that are inconsistent with, or may draw him from that wherein he is engag'd. Which Rule teaches us not to entangle our selves so far in the Business of the World, as to unfit us for the main Business of our Christian Profession, or hinder us in the great Duties of Religion that appertain to it.

Another Rule observ'd in these Exercises, was Temperance and Continence. This is held forth in the next Verse of the Epistle for this Day; *Every Man that striveth for the Mastery, is temperate in all things*: that is, they who strove for Victory in those Games, were wont to prepare themselves by a temperate Diet, and to prevent the Impediments of Intemperance and Incontinence, which might impair the Strength and Agility of their Bodies, and so unfit them for those Exercises: not that they us'd so great Abstinence as to macerate and weaken their Bodies, for that would rather prejudice than promote their Designs; but that they forbore those Excesses in eating and drinking, and other sensual Pleasures, that might prove a Hindrance, and kept to that moderate Use of God's Creatures, as might best fit and strengthen them for the Undertaking.

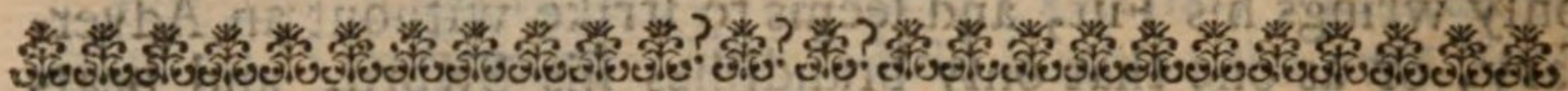
And if they took so great Care, and underwent such Hardships for a little bodily Exercise, which profited nothing, and was intended only for a short Pastime and Diversion; how much greater Care and Pains ought we to take about the spiritual Exercises of Religion, which are design'd for the eternal Welfare and Salvation of our Souls? This the Apostle urges in the next words; *Now they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible*. All that they ran and fought for, was but a Garland of Flowers, a Chaplet of Roses, or a Crown made of such fading Materials as soon wither'd away; things fitter to please Children, than to employ the Wit and Strength of Men: but we seek a never-fading Crown, a Kingdom that cannot be mov'd, reserv'd in Heaven for us. They strove only for a little empty Honour, and the vain Applause of the Multitude; but we for an eternal Weight of Glory, for Honour that is solid and substantial, permanent and lasting, yea, Eternal in the Heavens. And as there is a vast difference and disproportion in these things, so ought there to be in our Desires and Endeavours after them. This is the Apostle's Argu-

Argument here, which, with all considering Persons, will be of great strength. But the better to enforce it upon Christians, he backs it with his own Example and Experience, saying, in the next words; *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air*: that is, I move on in my Christian Course, not as one uncertain of the Way, or doubtful of receiving the Prize at the end of it; but as one well instructed and assured of both. And likewise in my Christian Warfare I fight, not as one that only wrings his Fist, and seems to strike without an Adversary, or as one that only brandishes his Sword, and beats the Air to no purpose; but I set my self in earnest, and strive effectually against the Enemies of God and my own Soul. And as the *Grecian Racers* and Combatants were wont to prepare their Bodies by Temperance and Contenance for those Exercises, so *I keep under my Body*, (saith he) *and bring it into Subjection*; lest that by any means, when *I have preached to others*, *I my self should be a Cast-away*. Where the Apostle, in *keeping under the Body*, alludes to the Custom of Wrestlers, who having foil'd their Adversary, keep him under, and bring him into subjection to them. In like manner St. Paul here, by the pious Exercises of Self-Denial and Mortification, brought himself under the Obedience and Discipline of Vertue and Religion, and kept the Flesh from rebelling against the Spirit; which he did, lest when he had preach'd or publish'd to others the Manner of striving, and the Way of winning the Prize, he himself should miscarry and miss of it.

This is the Drift of the Epistle for this Day, in which we are directed how to fight against our spiritual Enemies, so as to be able to gain the Victory; and how to run our Christian Race so as to be sure to obtain the Prize: the Greatness whereof, together with the Possibility and Certainty of attaining it, is sufficient to animate our Courage, and quicken our Endeavours after it.

It remains then that we seriously ponder upon, and put in practice these Precepts, observing the Rules of our Religion, and keeping our Bodies in Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity, all the days of our Lives. To which end, let us wean our selves from the World, and learn to live above the Frowns or Smiles of it; let us look thro and beyond all its Pomps and Vanities, and by the Eye of Faith behold the transcendent Joys and Glories of Heaven; and
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that will help us to despise the admired Toys and Trifles of this Life, and aspire to the greater and nobler Treasures of that which is to come. Let us then fix our Eye upon the Goal and the Prize affix'd to it; looking, with the Apostle, not to the things that are seen, for they are temporal, but to the things that are not seen, for they are eternal: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, thro the Merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XXXVI.

The GOSPEL for the *Septuagesima* Sunday,
or the Third Sunday before *Lent*.

St. Matthew xx. 1—17.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard: and when he had agreed with the Labourers for a Penny a day, he sent them into his Vineyard, &c.

OUR Blessed Saviour had, in the last Verse of the foregoing Chapter, told his Disciples, that *many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first*: by which he warn'd them, not to depend or value themselves too much upon the Privilege of their being his first Disciples: “For tho (saith he) you have some advantage of other Men, in being so early in the Discipleship, as to be the first that follow’d me, yet ’tis possible that some that come after you, may labour as diligently, and deserve as much, and so be as richly rewarded as you; yea, ’tis not altogether improbable, that some may arise who may labour more abundantly than you all, (as St. Paul did) and consequently tho they come after, may be preferred before you: and so you that are first may be last, and they that were last may be first.”

And then follows a Parable to illustrate this matter, which is the Gospel for this Day; in which our Saviour shews

shews us the manner of God's dealing with and rewarding his faithful Servants; which is, with all Justice and Kindness, according to his own Good-will and Pleasure. I shall therefore explain the Parable in the several Parts and Passages of it, and withal shew some of those excellent Lessons and Divine Truths, that may be learnt from it.

The Parable begins, in the first Verse, with these words; *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard.* By *the Kingdom of Heaven* here we are to understand the State of the Gospel, or the Kingdom of the Messiah, consisting of all the Members of his Church as his Subjects; in which sense the Kingdom of Heaven is often taken in the New Testament. By *the Householder* here, to whom this Kingdom is liken'd, may be meant either God the Father, the supreme Lord and Governour of the Universe, or God the Son, whom he hath made the Head and Ruler of his Church. This Householder is here said to go *out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard*: which, in a literal sense, is a Man's going by Break of Day, or as soon as it is light, into the Market-place, where Day-Labourers were wont to stand, expecting Employment, there to get or hire Servants to work in his Vineyard. But the mystical or spiritual Sense of those words, is Christ's calling or sending forth his Apostles in the beginning or early days of Christianity, to plant the Gospel, and propagate the Christian Faith in the World. This is stil'd, *the Lord of the Harvest's sending forth Labourers into his Harvest*; which Christ wills us, for our own and the Church's good, to pray for, Mat. 9. 37, 38. Where by *the Harvest* is meant the Field of the Church, into which the Apostles were sent to manure and manage it, gathering those that were ripe and ready to receive the Gospel, into his Barn, that so yielding the Fruits of Righteousness, they might in the end reap everlasting Life. So the *Vineyard* here is likewise to be understood of the same Church of Christ, into which his Ministers are sent to dress and prune it, that it may bring forth Fruit unto Holiness, and at last grow up likewise unto eternal Life.

It follows in the Parable, *And when he had agreed with the Labourers for a Penny a day, he sent them into his Vineyard.* 'Twas said before, that he went out to hire Labourers, and here we have an account of their Pay, which was agreed between them; and that was a Penny a day. This *Surdeor*
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In the Original, which we translate a Penny, was of the value of a Drachm, weighing the eighth part of an Ounce, which amounted to about seven Pence Halfpenny with us. This was the Hire contracted for, to shew that God never sets any on work without promising and paying their Wages; he knows *the Labourer is worthy of his Hire*, and acts accordingly: he doth not look that any should do his work for nothing; he is no such hard Master, as to expect to gather where he hath not sowed, or to reap where he hath not sowed; but considers every one's Labour, and rewards them according to their work. And having thus agreed with them, *he sent them into his Vineyard*. This is meant of Christ's calling his Apostles, and sending forth his Ministers into his Church, with a Power to preach the Gospel, and instruct his People in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Of this we read, *Mat. 10. 1, &c.* where we find Christ commissioning his Apostles and Disciples to this Work, telling them what they should do, how they should behave themselves to the People, and the People to them, that they might increase the Flock of Christ, and daily add unto the Church such as should be saved.

After this, it follows, *And he went out about the third Hour, and saw others standing idle in the Market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give unto you: And they went their way.* Where his going out about the third Hour, was about nine of the clock in the Morning with us; for they began their Computation of the Day a little after Sun-rising, where our six of the clock was their first Hour, and so their third Hour must be our ninth. Then it was that he went out, and saw some standing idle in the Market-place, and finding them without any Employment in that place of Business, he bid them go also into his Vineyard, and work there. By which we see, our Saviour was no Friend to Idleness; he would have every one engag'd in some honest and lawful Calling, and carefully attend the Business of it: and therefore seeing those idle and unemploy'd, he presently set them to work, and bid them go into his Vineyard. But here 'tis to be observ'd, that he made no Agreement with these about their Hire, nor would he bind himself to give the Wages of a whole Day for a part of it; but whatsoever is right and fitting (saith he) and according as you follow your Work for the time that you are in the Vineyard, you shall be rewarded. And with these Promises and

and Hopes they went their way, and set themselves to work.

Again, 'tis said in the next Verse, *That he went out about the sixth and ninth Hour*; that is, according to the former Computation about our twelve at Noon, and three in the Afternoon: then *he went forth again, and did likewise*, sending others into his Vineyard in like manner.

Moreover, *about the eleventh Hour*, which by the former Reckoning is about five in the Evening with us, *he went out again, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?* By which Question he seems to check and rebuke them for their Idleness, as being a great Loss of Time, and a lazy Neglect of the Gifts and Talents intrusted with them. But the Answer they gave, seem'd to carry a very plausible Excuse; for *they said unto him, Because no Man hath hired us*: whereby they ascrib'd their not being employ'd, not to any love of Idleness, or any indulging of Sloth and Laziness, but only to want of Work; they seem'd willing to be employ'd, and stood there looking for Work, but 'twas their hard fate not to meet with any; for *no Man (say they) hath hired us*.

The Householder perceiving this, *saith unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard*. He would have none continue idle and without Business, which would betray them into the power of the Devil, and expose them to all his Temptations; but set to work all that wanted, and were willing to be employ'd, at what time soever they came in: telling them withal, that *whatsoever is right* according to the time, *that shall ye receive*; ver. 6, 7. Where he encourages them to go on diligently and cheerfully in their Work, because their Labour should not be in vain.

This is the First Part of this Parable, wherein the Householder hath set all that are capable and unemploy'd, hard at work. But before I go on to the Second, which is his calling the Labourers to receive their Wages, give me leave to infer a few things from what hath been already said in this Parable.

And, 1st, From Christ's sending so many Labourers into his Vineyard, we may learn the unspeakable Goodness of God, in taking so great care of his Church. When Christ had order'd and settled the Christian Church in the World, he gave some to plant, and others to water it every where: and God himself was graciously pleas'd by their means to give it a very great Increase, by the Accession of *Jews and Gentiles*

Gentiles into it. And when the Harvest became plenteous, and the Labourers few, he vouchsaf'd to send more Labourers into the Harvest. Here we find him sending one after another, as the Necessities of the Church require; some at the third, others at the sixth and ninth Hour, others again at the eleventh Hour; calling some sooner, some later into his Vineyard, thereby taking care for a constant Succession of Pastors and Teachers to instruct and govern his People, promising *to be with them always*, to assist and bless them, *to the end of the World*. Hence we find God Almighty declaring by the Prophet *Isaiah*, what he had done for his Vineyard, how he had fenced it, and gather'd out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest Vine, and built a Tower in the midst of it, and also made a Wine-press therein; and then asks the Question, *What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* Isa. 5. 2, 3, 4. All which, together with his sending Workmen into it to prune and manure it, shew so great a Care and Goodness towards his Church, as ought to be for ever acknowledg'd by all the Members of it.

2dly, From Christ's sending Labourers into his Vineyard, we learn the Duty of his Ministers; which is, to be diligent and laborious in the Business about which he hath set them: for he sent Labourers, not Loiterers, into his Vineyard; he sent them there not barely to reap the Fruit of the Vine, or to revel it in the Blood of the Grape, but to dress and to prune it, *to labour in the Word and Doctrine*, to be instant in season and out of season, and to study to be *Workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*. The Man in the Gospel that had two Sons, sent them both to work, not to play in his Vineyard, Mat. 21. 28, 29. And tho one of them said, he would not go to work in it, yet he after repented and went; and he was more commended and rewarded than the other, who said, *I go Sir, and went not*, as we read in that Chapter: to shew that God regards the true honest Labourer, but rejects the false hypocritical Loiterer in his Vineyard. He allows none to stand idle, but requires all to move and act diligently in his Work; and to be *not slothful in Business, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*.

3dly, From God's taking so great care of his Church, and sending so many Labourers into it, we learn likewise the Peoples Duty, which is to improve by these means, and to be fruitful in every good Word and Work. *Who planteth*

planteth a Vineyard (saith the Apostle) and eateth not of the Fruit thereof? 1 Cor. 9. 7. He that is at any pains or charge herein, will reasonably expect to reap some Benefit or Comfort from it; otherwise like the barren Fig-tree, it will be cut down, and cast into the Fire. If we do not improve by these means of Grace, they will hereafter prove our greater Condemnation. Wherefore let us labour to grow in Grace, and the Knowledg of our Lord Jesus Christ, bringing forth Fruit unto Holiness, and in the end we shall receive everlasting Life. And this will lead me to the

Second Part of the Parable, which is the calling of the Labourers to receive their Wages: and this begins at the eighth Verse, in these words; *So when Even was come, the Lord of the Vineyard saith unto his Steward, Call the Labourers, and give them their Hire.* By which is meant, that Christ at the Evening or End of the World will send his holy Angels, to summon all Men to appear and stand before him, to receive according to their Works. But in the Parable the Order of reckoning with them is somewhat observable; for the Steward was bid to begin with those that came last into the Vineyard, and so to go on to the first; *beginning (saith the Text) from the last to the first.* Which was done, partly to keep the Disciples from all ambitious Thoughts and Desires of Precedence, and partly to encourage Men at all Times and Ages to come in, and to keep the latest Penitents from Despair. According to this method, they that *were hired at the eleventh Hour*, that is, about five in the Afternoon, were call'd in; and when they came, *received every Man a Penny.* God is a liberal Rewarder of short, if sincere, Services; and adds a vantage Blessing for the Diligence and Fidelity of the Work.

But when the first came, who had been much longer in the Vineyard, even from Morning to Evening, they suppos'd that they should have receiv'd more, according to the number of the Hours they had wrought above them; but *they likewise received every Man a Penny.* God measures out the Wages not by the Time, but by the Work: he that does but little Work in a longer time, shall have no more than he that doth the same in a less; and he that labours hard in one Hour, shall receive as much as he that loiters in more. However, *when they received it, and saw no more come, they began to murmur against the good Man*

of the House, complaining of the Inequality and seeming Injustice of the Distribution; saying, *These last have wrought but one Hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the Burden and Heat of the Day*: that is, thou hast given them as much Wages for a little space of time, as thou hast to us, who have labour'd all the Day long. Most Men are apt to grumble and complain against God, if they have not always what they would have; without reflecting upon themselves, or considering the true Cause of it. This was evident in the murmuring *Israelites*, who were wont upon all occasions to murmur against God if every thing did not go to their Mind: And the same Fault is but too visible among many of us, who upon every Change of Weather, or any Misfortune that seems to threaten or befall us, are presently complaining against Heaven, and apt to charge God foolishly.

But what Answer did the Householder make to these Complainants? Why, that the next words declare; *He answer'd one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: Didst thou not agree with me for a Penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.* Where we may observe,

1st, That care is to be taken, that we not only do no wrong to any, but avoid all suspicion of it. For we find the Householder here clearing himself from all Jealousy in this matter, saying, *Friend, I do thee no wrong*: which we should be able to say in all Cases; for he that does wrong to another, does a much greater wrong to his own Soul. Again, we may observe,

2^{dly}, That all Contracts and Agreements are to be kept and stood to, however they may seem to cross our Humour, Interest, or Designs; *Didst thou not agree with me for a Penny?* saith the Householder. No wrong is done, whilst Men keep true to Bargains and Contracts; but to do otherwise, is great Falseness and Injustice. God loves Truth in our Words, and Faithfulness in our Promises, but he abhors all Breaches and Falsifying in either; he is wont amply to reward the former, and never fails sorely to punish the latter.

Take there *that thine is, and go thy way.* 'Tis the Duty and Property of all good Servants and honest Labourers to be content with their Wages, according to Agreement, and to go away satisfy'd with their appointed Hire, without muttering or complaining against their Master. He

having

having done them Justice, in giving them their full Pay, they must not prescribe to him, but leave him to shew Kindness, and exercise his Bounty, where he shall think fit.

I will give unto this last (saith he) even as unto thee. And perhaps with good reason; for this Man's coming so late was not his own Fault, but his Misfortune, *because no Man had hired him, ver. 7.* He had come sooner, if he had been call'd. Beside, after his coming he kept close to his Work, doubled his Diligence, and did double the Service to any of the former; and therefore I who accept the Will for the Deed, and have an Eye upon the Diligence and Chearfulness of a Labourer, will give the same Reward unto him, as I do unto thee.

Neither can this be charg'd with the least Injustice, for *is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* Have not I the free and full Disposal of my own Bounty? Must I ask leave of others, how, and when, and to whom I shall bestow my own Gifts? *The Earth is mine (saith the Lord) and the Fulness thereof; the Heavens also are mine, and all that is therein:* and as they are both the Works of his Hand, so may he dispose of them according to his Will. None can challenge any thing from him by way of Merit, and all that any receive of him, is purely the Largess of his own Bounty; so that he may shew mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and none may say unto him, What dost thou?

There may be many Reasons best known to him, and not fit for us to enquire into, why the last that come into the Vineyard, may be rewarded and prefer'd before the first: as the Thief's confessing Christ upon the Cross, when some of his own Disciples deny'd and forsook him; and Paul's labouring more abundantly than they all, which made him be rank'd among the chiefest of the Apostles: and therefore it will not become us to judg or complain of God's dealing with any other.

Neither should God's shewing Favour unto some, become an Eye-sore unto others; for *is thine Eye evil (saith he) because I am good?* Is it fit for you to cast an envious Eye upon any, only because I have look'd graciously upon them? or to take occasion to entertain Grudges, merely from my favourable Glances towards them? Must I consult you in bestowing my Favours, and do nothing but what you please? This is the very Height of Arrogance

and Presumption, and you justly forfeit all Title to Favour by such insolent Behaviour: *So that* (as the Gospel concludes) *the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be call'd, but few chosen.* By which we see the Truth of what our Saviour before told his Disciples, that tho they were first call'd, yet some might and would come after them, that would out-strip them in Diligence, and so equal or exceed them in the Reward. A clear Instance of this we have in the *Jews*, who tho they were the Persons to whom God was first made known, and to whom Christ and the Gospel were first sent; yet few of them embracing and continuing in the Faith, the *Gentiles* that came in after, were prefer'd before them, and are receiv'd into Favour, when the other are rejected: which occasion'd those words of our Saviour, *Many are call'd, but few are chosen*; that is, many are call'd to the outward Privileges and Profession of the Gospel, but few by accepting the Terms are selected to the Reward of eternal Life.

This is briefly the Sense and Scope of this Parable appointed for the Gospel of this Day, which contains many good Lessons; I shall conclude with a few. And,

1st, We may learn hence not to depend too much upon any external Privileges; for tho we are call'd to the Profession of Christianity, and it may be before many others, yet without a suitable Conversation, we may come behind many that come after us.

2^{dly}, From what hath been said, let us learn to avoid Idleness, the Bane of Vertue, and the Nursery of all Vice; and labour to be always well employ'd in the Business of our particular or general Calling; that when our Lord cometh, he may find and reward us for so doing.

Lastly, Let us learn hence not to defer our Repentance, nor yet to despair of Mercy, at what time soever we come in; for tho late Repentance be seldom true, yet 'tis never too late to repent. You find that he that came in the last hour was rewarded as well as the first; the penitent Thief found favour upon the Cross: there was one such, that none may despair; and but one, that none may presume.



DISCOURSE XXXVII.

The **EPISTLE** for *Sexagesima Sunday*, or
the Second Sunday before *Lent*.

2 Cor. xi. 19——32.

*Ye suffer Fools gladly, seeing you your selves are wise ;
for ye suffer if a Man bring you into Bondage, if a
Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man
exalt himself, if a Man smite you on the Face, &c.*

THE Collect for this Day prays unto God, that since
we put not our Trust in any thing that we do, he
would mercifully grant, that by his Power we may
be defended against all Adversity.

The Epistle for the Day contains St. Paul's Defence or
Vindication of himself against the Reproaches of false
Teachers, and those that were seduced by them ; which
he manages with some kind of Zeal and Indignation.

The false Teachers against whom he sets himself are de-
scrib'd in the foregoing part of the Chapter, to be *false Apo-*
stles, deceitful Workers, transforming themselves into the Apo-
stles of Christ : imitating them in some things, and in others
pretending to exceed them. And no wonder (saith he,
ver. 13, 14, 15.) *for Satan himself is transform'd into an An-*
gel of Light ; and therefore it may not be thought strange,
if his Ministers also transform themselves into Ministers of
Righteousness ; tho time will discover their Hypocrisy, and
their *End shall be according to their Works*.

These false Teachers had vilify'd this great Apostle,
merely to exalt themselves ; and had us'd evil Arts, to get
their Persons in Admiration among the People, that they
might despise him. This put him upon a Necessity of pub-
lishing his own Praises, which tho it might look like a piece
of foolish Vanity, yet their forcing him to it by their De-
traction and Calumny, was sufficient both to excuse and to
justify it.

Let no Man then think me a Fool, in thus boasting (saith he, ver. 16.) or if it be a piece of Folly, yet pardon me in it, if being restrain'd thereunto, I boast my self a little; for since many glory after the Flesh, (saith he, ver. 18.) I will glory also. And I trust you will give me leave to do so, having much more Reason than they.

And then follows the Epistle for this Day, which begins thus; *For ye suffer Fools gladly, seeing ye your selves are wise:* that is, you that have an Opinion of your own Wisdom, may well enough bear with the Follies of such as you think are not so wise as your selves; for as the Strong are to bear with the Infirmities of the Weak, so are the Wise to excuse the Weaknesses of the Unwise. The Expression is ironical against such as presume too much upon their own Wisdom, and 'tis as if he had said, "You that are wise, may be rather pleas'd than angry, to see others sometimes play the fool; it being rather a setting off, than eclipsing of your Wisdom, and so may be rather a Diversion than any Offence to you: especially considering how much greater things you bear from false Teachers, who seek only to betray and beguile you. And I hope (saith he) you will bear with this Defect in me, if it be so; which yet is innocent and harmless, seeing that for all you are so wise, you bear with far greater Faults in my Adversaries, who do not so heartily wish and desire your Welfare. And indeed there is no Burden too heavy for you to bear, that is laid on by them; and there is no Hardship or Oppression of theirs, but you can undergo without the least Murmuring or Impatience."

So he tells them in the next Verse, *For ye suffer if a Man bring you into Bondage, if a Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man exalt himself, if a Man smite you on the Face.* Where the Apostle reckons up some of the many Hardships, which they contentedly endur'd from those false and deceitful Teachers: The first whereof was, their being brought into Bondage by them. By which is meant, their being enslav'd by their false Doctrine, and led captive by their Errors; which Captivity of the Mind is the worst of all Bondage, for thereby the nobler part, the Soul, is enslav'd to the imperious Dictates of their Leaders, tho they be never so false: and yet this Yoke is commonly put by false Teachers upon the Necks of their Disciples, whereby they are turn'd from the Truth, and turn unto Fables; which Yoke they are yet willing to bear at their hands.

Again,

Again, *2dly, Ye suffer, if a Man devour you*: that is, if these false Teachers live upon you, without ever making any Return, and so despoil you of all that you have; if by their false Pretences they devour you, as the *Pharisees* did the Widows Houses by their long Prayers, you seem not to groan under it, but suffer it patiently.

Again, *Ye suffer, if a Man take of you*; that is, by way of Presents, pretending to take nothing by way of Recompence, you suffer your selves to be impos'd upon by these Arts.

Moreover, *Ye suffer, if a Man exalt himself*: that is, if they assume to themselves an Honour or Power that belongs not to them, tyrannizing over your Consciences, and exercising a Dominion over your Faith, which they have no right to; you are content to bear it, having their Persons in admiration because of advantage.

Again, *lastly, Ye suffer, if a Man smite you on the face*: if they deal never so rudely and roughly with you, if they use you never so contumeliously, you are willing to take that, or any thing at their hands, being deceiv'd by their Wiles and vain Pretences. Whereas we that mean honestly, and seek only the Good and Salvation of your Souls, have not half that Influence or Authority over you. Thus was he driven, in vindication of his own Integrity, to lay open the Fallacies and false Games of those Deceivers.

These things *I speak* (saith he, in the following words) *as concerning Reproach, as tho we had been weak*: that is, I have minded you of these matters, to let you know what hard Usage they have shew'd to you, and what vile Reproaches they have cast upon me, whom they have vilify'd and set at nought, as one weak in Mind, and slow of Understanding. *Howbeit* (saith he) *wherein soever any is bold, I speak foolishly, I am bold also*: meaning, that whatever Advantages these false Teachers may pretend to, to magnify themselves above me, yet I must tell you (tho it may look like foolish Boasting) that I equal, if not excel them in all. And to satisfy you herein, 'twill be necessary to particularize some of the chiefest of them. As for instance,

Are they Hebrews? (saith he) *so am I*: *Are they Israelites?* *so am I*: *Are they the Seed of Abraham?* *so am I*. If they boast of their Descent, as coming from the Race of the *Jews*, the Stock of the *Israelites*, or the Line of the Patriarchs; I can say the same: so that herein they can pretend to no advantage of me in point of Pedegree or

Descent, which is in all points the same. If we come down to the Times of the Messiah, let me ask further, *Are they the Ministers of Christ?* I must tell you (tho I may be thought to *speake like a Fool*) *I am more*: meaning, that he was more than an ordinary Apostle, having taken more pains, and been in *Labours more abundant*, than they all.

But because those Seducers boasted much of their great Sufferings for the Name and Cause of Christ, to beget the more Favour and Credit among their Disciples, St. Paul declares that in that point likewise he far exceeded them all: to prove which, he gives us a Catalogue of the many and great Sufferings he underwent for the Doctrine of Christ. This he doth in the following Verses, where he tells us, *ver. 23.* that he was

In Stripes above measure. This relates to the frequent Scourgings he met with from the Jews and Romans: *Of the Jews* (saith he) *five times received I forty Stripes save one*, *ver. 24.* The number of Stripes among the Jews in cases of whipping, was not to exceed forty, as we read, *Deut. 23. 5.* but in many cases that Law allow'd a Mitigation, and 'twas frequent with them to abate one. The manner of inflicting it was with a Rod of three Branches, or with one twisted Cord, that had two more fasten'd to it. So that every Stroke gave three Stripes, which being an odd number, could not make the even number of forty; and therefore because they would not exceed, they rested at thirty nine. Now five times (saith the Apostle) did I undergo the Severity of this Punishment, without any Mitigation at the hands of the Jews. *Thrice* (saith he) *was I beaten with Rods*; that was by the Romans, whose Officers were wont with small Rods or Wands to beat Malefactors. So did they use the Apostles, *Acts 5. 40.* the Extremity whereof St. Paul felt three times. *Once* (saith he) *was I stoned*; that was at a seditious Tumult of Zealots, of which we read, *Acts 14. 19.* where without any judicial Process he was stoned, and drawn out of the City, supposing him to be dead.

Thrice (saith he) *I suffer'd shipwreck*: of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles; the last whereof is mention'd, *Chap. 24.* where the Ship being dash'd with the Violence of the Waves, St. Paul and his Company swam to shore upon some Planks, and saved themselves upon some Parcel of the Wreck.

A Night and a Day (as he goes on) *I have been in the Deep.* What this Deep was, is not easily to be understood from Scripture, and is variously interpreted by Authors: Of the Depth of the Sea, it cannot be meant, being impossible without a Miracle to continue alive there so long. Some therefore understand it of a Prison, in which there was a deep Cave or Dungeon, into which *St. Paul* was cast, *Acts* 16. 24. Others of a Well, which for its Depth was call'd *βυδος*, in which after his Danger in *Lystra* he hid himself: in either or both of which he was in the Depth of Misery and Distress, call'd therefore the Deep.

Again, he tells us, that he was *in Prisons frequent*; being more than once a Prisoner at *Rome*, at *Philippi*, and other places.

In Deaths oft; not that he could actually die more than once, but that he was oft-times in danger of Death, and sometimes suppos'd to be dead, as in the Tumult mention'd *Acts* 14. 19.

Moreover, he tells us, *ver.* 26. that he was *in Journeyings often*; still moving from place to place, like one that had no settled Habitation.

In Perils by Waters, being many times in danger of drowning.

In Perils by Robbers, who set upon him, and put him in danger of his Life.

In Perils by my own Countrymen, who accus'd me for a Perverter of the People, and a Subverter of *Moses's* Law, by preaching Doctrines contrary to the Customs and Traditions of the Elders; and thereby expos'd me to the Rage and Fury of the *Jews*.

In Perils by the Heathen, who charg'd me with decrying their Idol Gods, and destroying their Pagan Worship, and so brought me under the Laws and Malice of the *Romans*.

In Perils in the City; that is, at *Rome*, where I was twice a Prisoner, and endur'd great Hardships in both: or else at *Ephesus* the Metropolis of *Asia*, where (saith he) *I fought with Beasts*, *1 Cor.* 15. 32. meaning, that according to the Custom of the *Romans* with Malefactors, they let loose wild Beasts upon him, from which with great difficulty he rid himself, almost despairing of Life, and having the Sentence of Death past upon him, *2 Cor.* 1. 8, 9.

In Perils in the Wilderness, where he was pinch'd with Want, and almost famish'd with Necessity.

In Perils in the Sea, where he was more than once shipwreck'd.

In

In Perils among false Brethren, who pretended Friendship, and all the while intended nothing but Mischief in their hearts. These false Brethren were some of those Judaizing Christians, who blended Judaism with Christianity, and trimm'd between the Law and the Gospel; and these put the Apostle to no small trouble and pains.

For he tells us, in the next words, that he was in *Wearyness and Painfulness*; being tir'd with the Opposition and Contradiction of Sinners, which made him sometimes almost weary and faint in his Mind.

This put him upon *Watchings often*, being still upon his guard to preserve himself from the Wiles and Wickedness of such Enemies; which things brought him in *Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness*: whereby he was exercis'd in all kinds and degrees of Distress.

But *besides those things that are without*, that is, without in the Body, or without the Church; *I might add* (saith he) *that which cometh upon me daily, the Care of all the Churches*, which requires continual Vigilance and Sollicitude about the Affairs of them. Here we may observe, that what is here said of *St. Paul*, was never said of *St. Peter*, that he had the care of all the Churches: had that been any where affirm'd of him, we had heard of it in both ears from the Romish Writers, and had been indeed a better Argument and better Authority for the Pope's pretended Jurisdiction over all other Churches, than hath been ever yet alledg'd. But the Silence of the Scripture therein hath shew'd all those Pretensions to be utterly vain and groundless. This is a brief Account of the Troubles and Difficulties that beset *St. Paul* in the Exercise of his Office; with which the Sufferings boasted of by the false Teachers, are not fit to be nam'd or compar'd.

But because those false Teachers or Deceivers pretended a greater Love and Care of Mens Souls, than the true Apostles and Ministers of Christ, merely to cover their Hypocrisy and Double-dealing with them; the Apostle in the following words declares his more true and real Concern for their Welfare, appealing to their own Experience of that intire Affection and Sympathy they had found in him: asking in the next Verse, *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* If any be sick or ill-affected either in Body or Mind, you know my Readiness to succour and sympathize with him: if any by a Temptation fall off from the Faith, or by the Occasion and Example

ple of any other fall into Sin or Error, you cannot but see how I burn with Grief and a holy Indignation for them, and use all Ways and Means to reclaim him.

I shall add no more (saith he) by way of boasting, to which you have constrain'd me for my own Vindication: but if I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my Infirmities; with what Patience and Courage I sustain'd them; and will magnify the Grace of God given to me, to enable me so to do.

Finally, The Epistle concludes with the Apostle's Obtestation, or calling God to witness for the Truth and Sincerity of what he had said unto them: *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (saith he) which is God blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lye not:* that is, in all that I have deliver'd to you, the Searcher of Hearts knows, that I have used no Art or Equivocation, but have truly and faithfully spoken my mind to you, without the least Falsifying or Dissimulation.

This is the Sense and Substance of the Epistle for this Day; which may instruct us in two or three useful Lessons: As,

1st, To beware of false Teachers, who come to you in Sheeps clothing, that is, with soft and smooth Pretences; but inwardly are ravening Wolves, that with their long Prayers seek only to prey upon and devour you, *Mat. 7. 15.* 'Tis our Saviour's Caution, who best knew their Designs, and their Ways of compassing them, which we may well think are very pernicious, when he bids us to *believe them not, and to go not after them, Mat. 24.* that is, neither to receive their Doctrine, nor follow their Example. St. John gives the same Advice; *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they be of God, for many false Prophets are gone abroad into the World: 1 John 4. 1.* St. Paul found them seducing the *Corinthians* into Sects and Parties, and using all the Arts of Insinuation and Sophistry to that end; which cost him a great deal of trouble to detect and preserve them from them. Our Saviour hath given us a Rule to discern them, *Mat. 7. 16. By their Fruits you shall know them.* If instead of Peace and Unity so much press'd by Christ and his Apostles, they preach the People into Contentions, Schisms, and Divisions, you may safely conclude them to be not the Messengers of Christ, but the Emissaries of Satan; and therefore to be avoided by all good Christians,

itians, who should neither come into their Secrets, nor be united to their Assemblies.

2dly, From this Discourse we may learn, that tho Boasting is for the most part arrogant and vain, as ascribing too much to a Man's self, and allowing too little to others; yet in some cases it may be just and innocent, and at some times necessary. For we find *St. Paul*, who was as great an Enemy to Boasting as any, here constrain'd to it by the evil Arts of Deceivers. And the Cases wherein this may be allow'd, are wherein the Glory of God and Mens Salvation are concern'd, and likewise where a Man's Person and Office are too much vilify'd and undervalu'd. In these Cases we find *Moses* and *David*, and others in the Old Testament, speaking great things of themselves, when the Gifts and Graces of God given to them for the Good of others were too much despis'd and vilify'd by their Enemies. In the New Testament we find *St. Paul* magnifying his Office, when others sought to lessen it; and here we find him boasting of higher Privileges and greater Services done to the Church, than any of the false Teachers, who sate themselves in opposition against him: which is sufficient to justify the same Practice upon the like occasions.

Lastly, We may learn from hence to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, and to stand our ground against all that would corrupt or undermine it. That such there were in the Apostles days, who labour'd to bring in damnable Errors, denying the Lord that bought them, is evident by *St. Paul's* Encounter here and elsewhere with false Teachers: and that there are too many such in our days, the great Apostacy from the Faith, and the sad Decay of Order and Discipline in the Church of Christ too plainly verify. These we are to resist stedfast in the Faith, and not suffer our selves to be seduc'd from the Doctrine and Communion of the Church by such Impostors. In short then, let us by the Example of this great Apostle quit our selves like good Soldiers of Jesus Christ, manfully fighting his Battels against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and continuing his faithful Soldiers and Servants to our lives end. This we have all promis'd, which if we perform, we shall not fail to receive a Crown of Glory: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

The GOSPEL for *Sexagesima Sunday*, or the
Second Sunday before *Lent*.

St. Luke viii. 4—16.

When much People were gather'd together, and were come to him out of every City, he spake by a Parable. A Sower went out to sow his Seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the Way-side, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains the Parable of a Sower, deliver'd before a very great Multitude, by our Blessed Saviour, who was wont to instruct the People by such Figures and Resemblances; being an easy and familiar way of instilling Knowledg into them.

The Gospel begins with these words; *When much People were gathered together, and were come to him out of every City, he spake by a Parable.* The foregoing Verses tell us, that Jesus went throughout every City and Village, preaching the Glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God. And when he departed thence, great Multitudes followed him to the Sea-side, coming out of every City, and gather'd themselves about him; insomuch, that (as St. *Matthew* relating this same Passage, tells us, *Mat. 13. 1, 4.*) he went into a Ship and sate down, the whole Multitude standing on the Shore; where being seated, he spake many things to them in Parables, whereof this which follows was one. This way of Teaching by Parables was frequently us'd among the Jews, being apt to leave the most lively and lasting Impressions upon the Mind; and therefore 'twas followed by our Blessed Saviour, who taught his Disciples the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven by such apt Similitudes.

But to come to the Parable here related by St. *Luke*; in speaking to which, I shall consider,

First,

First, The Parable it self.

Secondly, The Explication or Unfolding of it. And,

Thirdly, The Use and Application to be made of it. And,

First, For the Parable it self in the literal Sense, that we have from the fifth to the eighth Verse; where we read, *that a Sower went out in the Field to sow his Seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the Way-side: that is, some of the Seed fell on the Path or Ground left unplough'd, for a Foot-passage through the Field; where being trodden down and expos'd to the Birds, the Fowls of the Air devour'd it. Some fell upon a Rock or stony Ground, where as soon as it sprung it up it wither'd away, because it lacked Moisture. St. Matthew expresses it, that for want of deepness of Earth, and firm rooting, when the Sun was up, it was soon scorch'd and died away. Some again, fell among Thorns, and the Thorns sprang up with it, and choak'd it: that is, where the Roots and Briars were not destroy'd, they overgrew the Corn, and so quite suppress'd the Growth of it. And, lastly, Some fell on good Ground, and sprang up, and bare Fruit an hundred Fold: where falling on a fertile Soil, it encreas'd wonderfully, yielding at Harvest an hundred Seeds for one that was sowed.*

These things are so well known and experienc'd by all Husbandmen, as not to need any farther insisting on them: only we may observe here, that Christ in teaching the People, admirably accommodated his Instructions, sometimes to the Temper and Employments, sometimes to the Exigencies and other Circumstances of their Conditions; the better to insinuate his Doctrine, and to make it take with them. When Fishermen were to be converted and made his Disciples, he convinced them by an extraordinary and unexpected Draught of Fishes, to take them in their own way. When great Multitudes, that follow'd him till they almost fainted and pin'd away with Hunger, were to be gain'd over to him, he did it by a seasonable Instance of his Divine Power, in *feeding five Thousand with five Loaves and two little Fishes*, Matth. 14. where his relieving them in Distress, made way for the receiving his Doctrine, and his satisfying their Hunger, satisfy'd and remov'd all their Doubts. So here, when our Saviour would instruct the Husbandmen and Farmers in the Christian Religion, he doth it by the Parable of a Sower; and elsewhere, by that
of

of the Wheat and the Tares, merely to plough up the fallow Ground of their Hearts to receive the Seed of Divine Grace; and by the Knowledg of the difference of Soil and Improvement of Ground, they might increase in the Knowledg of more heavenly Things. And this will lead me,

Secondly, To the Explication of this Parable, and to shew the mystical and spiritual Sense of it, as it is here expounded by our Saviour: but before I do that, I must take notice of that pathetical Admonition, with which he closes the literal, and introduces the spiritual Sense of this Parable, in these words; *And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* Which words are a Call, to excite their Attention to what he had farther to say to them, and to imprint these Truths in their Understanding and Memories. Whereupon the Disciples asked him, saying, *What might this Parable be?* By which they enquir'd into the Sense and Meaning of the Parable. In answering of which Question, Christ first minds them of a particular Privilege granted them above others: *Unto you it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God,* so as to have them made plain and clear to you; *but to others in Parables,* not expounded to them, whereby they are left in the dark; that according to the Prophecy of *Isaias,* *In seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*

And having premis'd this, he proceeds to unfold to them the Parable: *Now the Parable* (saith he) *is this; The Seed is the Word of God,* sown in the Field of his Church; where Christ, the great Husband-man, sends forth his Ministers to sow the Seed of sound Doctrine in his Church, and likewise to plant and water it; leaving the Increase to his Blessing, who is alone able to give it.

Those by the Way-side, are they that hear: then cometh the Devil and taketh the Word out of their Hearts, lest they should believe, and be saved. When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom (saith St. *Matthew*) and understandeth it not; that is, as the Word in the Original signifies, layeth it not to heart, not seriously minding or meditating upon it, so as it may sink deep enough to take root within them; these suffer Satan, the Wicked one, to catch away that which was sown in their Hearts: like Seed lying upon the Surface of the Earth, the Evil one cometh and picketh it away, as
Birds

Birds do Corn, by the Way-side ; and so they neither believe nor are sav'd by it. Of this sort of Hearers we have too many in our Days, who receive the Word in at one Ear, and let it out at the other.

They on the Rock are they, which when they hear, receive the Word with Joy ; and these have no Root, which for a while believe, and in time of Temptation fall away. The Seed sown on stony Ground, was the Word preach'd to obstinate and obdurate Hearts ; which tho they seem'd to receive it a while with some kind of Joy, conceiving no small Delight either in the Novelty of the Matter, or the Neatness of the Composure, or the Fineness of the Delivery : yet these things going no farther than the Ear, without ever entring or piercing into the Heart, leave no Impression behind them ; and whenever any Trouble or Difficulty arises in their Duty, they presently forget, forsake, and fall away from it. And of this kind of Auditors our Age likewise affords too many.

That which fell among Thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choak'd with the Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures of this Life, and bring no Fruit to Perfection. The sowing of Seed among Thorns, denotes the Preaching the Gospel to such as give it indeed the Hearing ; but by and by go away with Hearts so charg'd with the Cares and Concerns of this Life, where the Word should enter, that it can find no admission or abiding there ; their great Sollicitude about the Honours, Profits, and Pleasures of the World, utterly stifles and smothers the Word, that it can have no good effect them : *They come indeed (saith God) and sit before me as my People, willing to hear and learn from me ; but their Heart is all the while after their Covetousness ; saying, When will the new Moon be gone, that we may sell Corn ; and the Sabbath be over, that we may set forth Wheat ? making the Ephah small, and the Shekel great, falsifying the Ballance with Deceit ; Amos 8. 5.* Of such Worldlings as these do many Congregations mainly consist, who hear the Word ; but the Cares of the World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches so choak it, that they become unfruitful, and bring no Fruit to perfection. Which Expression relates to some sort of Fruits, that hold not out to the proper time of ripening, but are blighted and fall off before the Harvest.

But that on the good Ground (which are the last, and to be feared the least of Hearers) are they, which in an honest and
good

good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience. These receiving the Word into well-meaning and true Hearts, it takes firm Root there, and after springs up in the Fruits of Holiness towards God, of Righteousness towards Men, and of Temperance, Chastity, and Contentment towards our selves; all which it brings forth with Patience and Perseverance to the End, without swerving or falling from them.

This is briefly the Parable and the Explication of it, appointed for the Gospel for this Day; by which it appears, that of the four sorts of Soil, there was but one that came to Good; and that gives to understand, that three to one of the Hearers miscarried: this was great odds, and 'twere to be wish'd, that the odds in our Days may not prove greater. And the Fault of all this lies chiefly in the Hearing. Which will lead me in the

Last place, to the Use and Application we are to make of this Parable; and that will consist mainly in directing us about the Matter and Manner of our Hearing. *St. Mark* relating this same Parable, infers from it a Caution concerning the Matter, saying, *Take heed therefore what ye hear, Mark 4. 24.* *St. Luke* here from this Parable infers a Caution concerning the Manner of Hearing; *Take heed therefore how ye hear, Ver. 18.* Both which must be a little consider'd.

1st then, To perform this Duty of Hearing aright, we must look to the Matter, and take heed what we hear, that we be not impos'd upon by false Teachers, who would turn our Ears from the Truth, and turn them unto Fables; but hearken only to sound Doctrine, and keep to the words of Truth and Soberness. To this end, care must be taken of the Persons whom we hear, that they be duly qualify'd and authoriz'd to teach; and that we *heap not to our selves Teachers, having itching Ears*; for such will mislead us into Errors and Heresies, and so turn to great Ungodliness. Again, care is to be taken of the Places where we hear: Christ and his Apostles went to the Temple and the Synagogues, the Places dedicated and set apart for Publick Worship; they were Seducers and false Teachers that crept into Houses, to lead captive silly Women, laden with divers Lusts. But chiefly, care must be had of the Matter, what we hear, that it be sound and orthodox; which the Apostle compares to *Gold and Silver, and pre-*

cious Stones; not Errors and Divisions, which he resembles to *Wood, Hay and Stubble*, built upon the *Foundation of Christianity*, which cannot stand the Trial; 1 Cor. 3. 12. Now to preserve sound Doctrine, and to guide our selves aright, as to the Matter of Hearing, we must (as the Apostle directs) *hold fast the Form of sound Words deliver'd to us* in Faith and Truth, 2 Tim. 1. 13. that is, we must keep close to the antient Creeds and Confessions of the Catholick Church, which are the Standard of Truth, and the Touchstone of sound Doctrine; that we may not be like Children, toss'd to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, by the cunning Craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive.

And because the too great Liberty of preaching and prophesying hath bred much Confusion, and encourag'd many to strive about Words, to no other purpose than to the Subversion of the Hearers; it would not be amiss, if for the preventing of Errors, and the preserving of sound Doctrine, the whole Substance of Religion were compriz'd in certain Sermons or Forms of Preaching, to be us'd and kept to by those that are to instruct the People, that they may not be carried about with divers and strange Doctrines, to the great Disturbance of the Church, and the greater Peril of Mens Souls. This for the Matter of this Duty, *What we are to hear*. The

Second Caution is for the Manner of it, *How we are to hear*. This is likewise to be carefully heeded; for tho we should be right in the Matter we hear, yet if we offend in the Manner of Hearing, we shall reap no Benefit by it. To hear aright then, we must,

1st, Hearken with Diligence and Attention, receiving it not as the Word of Man, but of God; not sleeping or talking, or passing it away as an idle Tale, but diligently attending and listning to it as to the Words of Eternal Life. There is no greater sign of the Contempt of any Person, than the slighting of his Words, and disregarding what he says: and consequently a drowsy and careless Behaviour in the Church of God, is a plain Contempt of him, and a casting his Word behind our back.

2^{dly}, We are to hear the Word of God with Fear and Reverence, considering the Greatness of the Majesty in whose Presence we are, and whose Word is deliver'd to us: *God is greatly to be feared* (saith the Psalmist) *in the Assemblies of the Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all* that

that draw nigh unto him; Psal. 89. 7. We are to possess our Minds with awful Apprehensions of him, and to compose our Bodies into all the decent Postures of Reverence and Adoration: This is Solomon's Advice, Eccles. 5. 1. Keep thy Foot when thou goest to the House of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, for they consider not that they do Evil.

3dly, We must hear the Word of God with Understanding and Faith, endeavouring to know it aright, and yielding a firm and unshaken Assent to it. We read, that the Gospel preach'd to the Jews, *did not profit them, because it was not mix'd with Faith in them that heard it; Heb. 4. 2.* They that will not rightly understand, nor firmly believe the Word of God deliver'd to them, will rather be the worse than the better for it. The clearest Light can give no Direction, if it be shut up in a Cloud, or imprison'd in a dark Lanthorn; neither can the brightest Light of Divine Truths be of any use, where it shines not into the Soul, or is with-held in Unrighteousness: the best Food can afford no Nourishment, where it is not receiv'd or digested; nor can the Food of God's Word nourish the Soul to eternal Life, unless it be receiv'd and digested by Faith.

4thly, We must hear the Word of God with Meekness and Humility. So St. James exhorts us, *to receive with Meekness the ingrafted Word, that is able to save our Souls; James 1. 21.* where he intimates, that the kindly receiving of God's Word will ingraft it upon the Stock of our corrupt Nature, and make it grow and fructify, to the saving of our Souls. St. Peter wills us, *as new-born Babes, to desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby; 1 Pet. 2. 2.* that is, to suck in the pure Nourishment of the Word with the Simplicity of Infants; that we may increase in Christianity, and grow up to the Fulness of the Stature of Men in Christ Jesus. *The Meek will be guide in Judgment (saith the Psalmist) and the Humble he will teach his Way.* These come without Pride and Prejudice, and with honest Desires of knowing their Duty; and God delights to meet and communicate his Mind to such: whereas he beholdeth the Proud afar off, and leaves them so to their own Vanity and Prejudices, that in *hearing they shall hear, but not understand; and in seeing they shall see, but not perceive.*

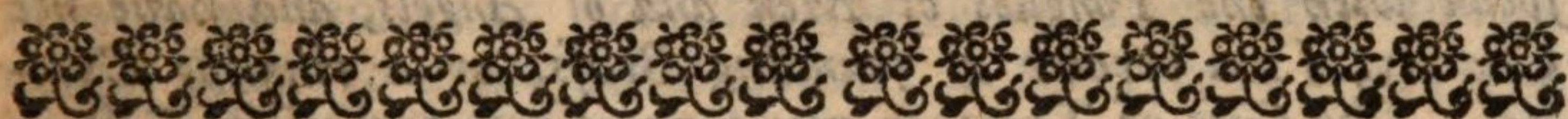
5thly, We must hear the Word of God with an inward Love and Delight in it; saying with holy David, *O how I love thy Law! 'tis my Meditation Day and Night.* Not

with those in *Malachi*, *What a Weariness is it?* When will the Sabbath be over, and the Sermon ended, that we may return to our worldly Business? As if it were a Burden to hear God speaking to them, and an irksom thing to attend his Service. They that can find no Pleasure in hearing the Word, will find but little profit by it: to such the Holy Scripture becomes not only a dead, but a killing Letter; and the Word preach'd proves rather a Saviour of Death than Life. They that receiv'd not the *Truth in the love of it*, were given up *to believe a Lye, and carried away with strong Delusions*; 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11. And such as are cold or lukewarm in their Duty, coming to Church more from Custom and Formality, than any true Love or Desire of Edification; instead of being accepted of God, will be spued out of his Mouth.

Lastly, To hear the Word aright, we must add Doing to our Hearing; for not the Hearers, but the Doers of the Word shall be justified. We must obey from the Heart the Form of Doctrine deliver'd to us. 'Tis Practice that is the Life of our Profession, and can alone give the Efficacy, and answer the End of all our Hearing. In short, we are so to hear, as to edify in Knowledg, to be built up in our most holy Faith, and to bring forth the Fruits of a holy Life; without this, all our Hearing will be to no purpose, and the many Sermons we have heard will rise up in Judgment against us, to our greater Condemnation: so that as the evil Servant was judged out of his own Mouth, so will the careless Hearer be out of his own Ears.

Thus we see both what, and how we are to hear, of both which we are concern'd to take heed, that we fail not in either: For it will be to no purpose how we hear, unless we hear what we should; and 'twill be to as little purpose to hear what we should, if we care not how we hear it. So that great heed is to be taken, both as to the Matter and Manner of Hearing; that we hear nothing but sound Doctrine, and with Hearts prepar'd to receive and practise it. This we should the rather do, because of the Danger of miscarrying in this Duty. We see, that of the four sorts of Ground, wherein the Seed of God's Word is sown, there is but one that receives Benefit and fructifies by it; the generality of Hearers coming to Church, more to see and meet their Neighbours for other secular Ends, than to learn their Duty, and be edified by it. When the good Seed is sown,
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the Enemy is ever awake to sow his Tares of Errors and Divisions while we sleep; and the Devil is always ready to take the Word out of our Hearts, that it may bring no Fruit to Perfection: The Thorns and Briars of worldly Cares are apt to choak the Word, and render it unprofitable; false Teachers are busy to instil their Poison, and our own corrupt Hearts are too ready to receive it. Let us therefore look about us, lest the good Seed of Divine Truths go no farther than our Ears; and there, like loose Corns in the Highway, are pick'd up by the Fowls of the Air; but let it sink and take Root in the Heart, lest, like Corn sown on a Rock, it die away for lack of Moisture: Nor let the Thorns of worldly Cares and Troubles so stifle and choak the Word, that it come to nothing; but receiving it into honest and good Hearts, that meditate upon it, and apply it to our selves, and by Prayer beg a Blessing upon it, it may bring forth Fruit unto Holiness here, and at last ripen into everlasting Life: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XXXIX.

The EPISTLE for the Sunday call'd *Quinquagesima*, or the Sunday before *Lent*.

I Cor. xiii. 1, 2, to the end.

Tho I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal, &c. Charity suffereth long, and is kind, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of our being taught, that all our Doings without Charity are nothing worth; and therefore prays for the Holy Ghost to pour into our Hearts that most excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace and of all Vertues; without which who-soever liveth, is counted dead before God

Now the Place where we are taught all this, is in the Epistle for this Day; where the Excellency, the Usefulness, and the Comprehensiveness of this Grace of Charity are largely set forth. And that is here done these four Ways:

First, By preferring it above all the Gifts of the Spirit; from the 1st to the 4th Verse.

Secondly, By describing the Nature and Properties of it; from the 4th to the 8th Verse.

Thirdly, By its perpetual and never-failing Duration; from the 8th to the 13th Verse. And,

Fourthly, By preferring it above all other Graces of the Spirit, in the last Verse. I shall speak to all these in their Order, and conclude with an Exhortation to this excellent Grace.

I begin with the Preference of it before all the Gifts of the Spirit, in the three first Verses; where it is prefer'd,

1st, Before the Gift of Tongues, in these words; *Though I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.* The Gift of Tongues was a necessary and useful Gift in the Beginning of Christianity, for the propagating the Gospel into the remote and dark Corners of the Earth; and therefore the Apostles and others were super-naturally endow'd with it, to enable them to speak to Men of all Nations and Languages, and declare to them in their several Tongues the wonderful Works of God: 'twas by this that we and all other Countries enjoy the Light of the Gospel to this Day. Of this Gift St. Paul had a share above the rest of the Apostles; which made him say, that he spake with Tongues more than they all: and yet he declares, that all this without Charity, or a Desire of edifying, is no better than the empty Noise of sounding Brass, or the fainting Melody of a tinkling Cymbal; meaning, that all the Charms of Human and Angelical Eloquence, the loftiest Strains of Rhetorick, and all the Diversity or Curiosity of Language, are nothing worth, if not directed by Charity, and accompany'd with a Desire of doing Good. And therefore the Apostle tells us, that he had rather speak five Words with his Understanding to edify others, than ten thousand Words to no purpose.

2dly, Charity is prefer'd above the Gift of Prophecy, and the Knowledg of all Mysteries, in the next words; *Tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all* Know-

Knowledg, yet without Charity I am nothing: where by the Gift of Prophecy, and the Understanding of all Mysteries, and all Knowledg, may be meant the Power of predicting future Events, and the expounding the Holy Scriptures, as the Prophets did of old; or the Knowledg of the Mysteries of the Gospel, as the Apostles and others have had ever since: In all which, the clearest Insight and Understanding is of no avail, unless they are govern'd by this Grace, and directed to the Ends of Charity.

3dly, Charity is prefer'd above the Gift of Miracles, and that Faith by which they are done, in these words; *Tho I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing*: where we are to understand the Faith of Miracles, describ'd by the moving of Mountains, according to that of our Saviour; *If ye have Faith, you shall say unto this Mountain, Be thou remov'd and cast into the midst of the Sea, it shall be done, Mat. 21. 21.* And elsewhere, *To him that believeth, all things are possible.* And yet this wonder-working Faith, if not employ'd for the Good of others, will turn to no account; for tho the doing these great things might seem to make him somebody in the eyes of Men, yet in the sight of God he is nothing.

4thly, Charity is prefer'd above the Gift of Alms-giving, in these words; *Tho I give all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*: where you see that a Man may give very liberally to the Poor without Charity; as when 'tis done from Vanity and Ostentation, or when it proceeds from a foolish Pity, tending more to the Encouragement of Idleness, than the promoting the publick or private Good; in which cases 'tis rather Profuseness than Charity, and wanting the true Principles of the Love of God and our Neighbour, becomes a fruitless Gift, and profiteth nothing.

Lastly, Charity is here prefer'd before Martyrdom it self, in these words; *Tho I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*: by which it appears, that some Men may seem to be Martyrs, and to suffer and die for Religion, and yet be void of all true Charity. For some out of Weariness of Life have made away themselves, as Self-Murderers; some again, for their Obstinacy in Heresies and Blasphemies, have been burnt at the Stake, as Atheists and Hereticks; others have too easily parted with their Lives out of Vain-glory and Revenge: All which wanting the true Principle of the Love of God and themselves, have miss'd the Crown of Martyrdom, and reap'd nothing but Shame and

Misery. So that Charity is here advanc'd far above all other Gifts of the Spirit, which receive all their Excellency and Usefulness from it, and without it are altogether vain and unprofitable.

But because some have confin'd Charity only to giving to the Poor, which is the least part of it, and may be done without it; the Apostle proceeds in the following Verses to shew the Nature of this Vertue, and to describe it in the several Branches and Properties of it. As,

1st, *Charity suffereth long*, and beareth a great while with the Follies and Frailties of Mankind; and so 'tis oppos'd to that Hastiness of Spirit, that makes Men break out into sudden and rash Anger, and provokes them to Revenge, and the returning of all the Evil done to them: whereas the Charity that suffers long, teaches them better to govern their Passions, not to catch Fire at every Spark, nor to be inflam'd at every little Unkindness or Trespas done to them; but to be willing to overlook many Failings, to forgive lesser Injuries, and never to return any. This is the Long-suffering so often mention'd and requir'd in Scripture, which consists in forgiving and forbearing one another in Love; of which God hath given us his own Example, in passing by many daily Trespases and Provocations, and hath commanded us to do the same. He that can defer his Anger, and put off the righting himself for every little Affront or Trespas; he that can long bear with the Failures and Miscarriages of others, as easily as we overlook the Mistakes and Misdemeanors of those whom we entirely love: such a one is possess'd with this excellent Grace of Charity. But he that is soon angry, that cannot forgive, but is still meditating Revenge upon every occasion; such a one hath not made one step to the attaining of this Vertue: for *Charity suffers long*, and is more ready to receive another, than revenge a former Wrong.

2dly, *Charity is kind*; that is, it not only bears with much Evil, but is ever ready to do all manner of Good: and that to the Bodies of Men, by relieving them in Cases of unavoidable Want and Necessity; to their Souls, by comforting, counselling and wishing their Salvation; to their Goods and Estates, by assisting and promoting, as far as they may, their Welfare and Prosperity; to their good Names, by giving them their just Praises, and not denying them the Honour due to their Places and Merits. They that do these things, have learnt

learnt and practis'd this Act and Office of Charity ; but they that do otherwise, are far from it : for *Charity is kind.*

3dly, *Charity envieth not* ; that is, it is not griev'd or gall'd at another's Prosperity, but rather rejoices than repines at it. Some Men, if another excel them in Parts, Power, or Preferment, fret and grow uneasy ; complaining of their own, and murmuring at another's Condition, which they think and find to be better than theirs. This is an evil and envious Spirit, and shews them to be destitute of the Grace of Charity : for that *envies not.*

4thly, *Charity vaunteth not it self* ; that is, it doth nothing out of Vain-glory and Ostentation, to be seen of Men, to gain their Applause, or to be thought somebody. This was the Fault of the *Pharisees* of old, who in all their good Works courted only the Honour and Praise of Men : If they gave Alms, they sounded a Trumpet to call others to see and observe their Charity ; if they pray'd, they lifted up their Voice like a Trumpet, that others might hear and admire their Devotion ; if they fasted, they disfigur'd their Faces, and put on a dejected Countenance, that they might appear unto Men to fast ; and in all that they did, they sought more the Honour that cometh from Men, than the Glory of God. And this Vanity reigns in too many still, who aim more at their own Glory, than the Good of others in what they do. Now they that act thus from a Principle of Vain-glory, are far from Charity : for that *vaunteth not it self.*

5thly, *Charity is not puffed up* ; that is, 'tis free from Pride, and keeps the Mind from swelling, or being lifted up with a vain Opinion of its own Perfections ; so that neither Wealth nor Wisdom, neither Power or Preferment, nor any real or imaginary Excellency, can make the good Man think more highly of himself than he ought to think : But Charity corrects all such Tumors and Swellings of the Mind, and makes it think soberly, according as God hath given to every one the Measure of Faith. *Knowledge* indeed *puffeth up*, and makes Men vain and proud of a little ; but *Charity edifieth*, and keeps them humble and lowly. *He whose Heart is lifted up* (saith the Prophet) *is not upright in him* ; Hab. 2. 4. Such a one is void of the Grace of Charity ; for that *is not puffed up.*

6thly, *Charity doth not behave it self unseemly* ; the Word in the Original is *ἐκ ἀγνημοσύνης*, which signifies to act out of order, to leave the Rule, and to do things out of sorts : It refers to a Rule mention'd in the Close of the foregoing Chapter ;

ter; where 'tis requir'd that all things be done decently and in order. In the Original it is *εὐχρημόνως*, which implies an orderly Form and Figure of Action, and to do all things in a due Decorum; to do otherwise, is *αἰσχρονομίαν*, to behave ourselves unseemly, which our Apostle tells us, that Charity carefully avoids: to which end, it considers the several Stations and Conditions wherein Men are plac'd, as Superiors, Inferiors and Equals; and teaches Men to demean themselves suitably and becomingly towards each: that is, to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their Betters in Place and Office; to be affable and courteous to those of the same Rank and Degree with themselves; and to shew Candour and Condescension to those that are beneath them. This is the seemly Behaviour which this Vertue directs and keeps to; so that they who are arrogant, insolent and unmannerly, are destitute of Charity: for that doth not *behave it self unseemly*.

7thly, *Charity seeketh not her own*; that is, not indirectly or inordinately: it is not so immoderately addicted to its own Interest, as to cast off all Regard of others, or to pursue it by any unjust or unlawful Means. In this sense it is, that the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 10. 24. *Let no Man seek his own, but every Man another's Wealth*. There are some of that narrow and selfish Spirit, as to care for none but themselves; and if they can but live in Ease and Plenty, regard not what becomes of any other. This is so contrary to this Grace of Charity, that it cannot reside where this selfish Spirit reigns: and so it does in the Breasts of all such, as seek their own private Interest, before, above, and to the prejudice of the Publick, and study to enrich themselves from the Spoils of others. These are they of whom the Apostle complains, saying, *All Men seek their own, and few the things of others*, Phil. 2. 20, 21. They that do so, are utterly void of this Grace; for Charity does not confine our Kindness to our selves, but enlarges the Heart, and extends it as far as possible to the Good of all Mankind: *Charity seeketh not her own*.

8thly, *Charity is not easily provoked*, *ὃ παροξύνεται*; the word signifies not so much an Easiness, as an Excess of Passion, the Paroxysms and extravagant Heights of Anger, when it transgresses the Bounds of Reason and Religion, and runs into Rage and Impatience: and so the word should be translated, not being easily provok'd; for that is imply'd in the first Property of Charity, *it suffers long*; that is, is not easily mov'd to

to any hasty or sudden Passion, or soon provok'd to Revenge: but here, to distinguish it from that, it should be render'd, it is not highly provok'd, nor rises above the due Measures; for so the original Word imports. 'Tis indeed as lawful to be angry, as 'tis to love, to rejoice, or exercise any other Passion. So the Apostle intimates, that we may be angry and sin not; but care must be taken that it rise not too high, and that it last not too long: our Blood must not boil up or break out into Fury, nor must the Sun go down upon our Wrath; for that is to give place unto the Devil, to lose the Use of our Reason and Understanding, and to suffer the Beast to ride the Man. So this Act or Office of Charity directs, not to be transported with Rage and Fury, but to keep our Passions within due Bounds: for *Charity is not too highly provoked.*

9thly, *Charity thinketh no Evil*; that is, it hath no evil Designs upon any, nor doth it imagine or contrive any Mischief or Trouble to them. *Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour*, as the same Apostle speaks elsewhere: it worketh it not either by the Head, or by the Hand, but studies to do all the Good it can by both. Moreover, *Charity thinketh no Evil*; i. e. it is not jealous or suspicious, nor seeks to blast the Credit of other Mens Actions or Reputations by any evil Surmises, misjudging the Principle, Motive or End of their Actions, or making bad Constructions of what they say or do: all that do so, are destitute of this Grace of Charity; for that neither doth nor *thinketh any Evil.*

10thly, *Charity rejoiceth not in Iniquity*: by which is meant, that a good Man takes no pleasure in the Sins or Afflictions of any other, contrary to the inhuman Disposition and De-meanour of such as have a secret Delight in the Misfortunes and Miscarriages of others, and sport themselves in their Follies and Impieties. Whereas Charity conceives a Sorrow and Trouble at such Failings; it assists them with Prayers, Counsels and Reproofs, and rather laments than laughs at the Evils that befall them: *It rejoiceth not in Iniquity*;

But *rejoiceth in the Truth*: It is glad when any false Accusation is detected, and the Truth of things is made to appear: contrary to the wicked Temper and Practice of such, as make Lyes their Refuge, and delight in slandering and speaking all manner of Evil one of another. Whereas Charity is pleas'd in hearing well of other Men, and rejoices with them, whose good Names are vindicated from false Aspersions.

11thly, *Charity beareth all things*, *παντα σέβει*; it covereth all things, so the Word signifies: it refers to Silence, and holding the peace, where we are not call'd upon to speak; and signifies Charity to be so far from joying in another's Faults or Infirmities, that it conceals all Ill of another, where it is not greater Charity to reveal it. Solomon tells us, that *Love covereth all Sins*, Prov. 10. 12. and the Apostle, that *Charity covereth a Multitude of Sins*. It casts a Veil of Silence over them, and rather hides than discloses another's Nakedness.

12thly, *Charity believeth all things*; that is, all things that are said for the excuse or mitigation of a Fault: It is so far from aggravating any Evil, that it excuses all it may, and is willing to believe all the Good it can of other Men: it doth not lessen any Man's Worth, nor is it uneasy under any Man's Commendation, as too many are wont to be, but rather adds to than detracts from any: it puts the most favourable Construction that may be upon all things, and believes the best it can of all Persons.

13thly, *Charity hopeth all things*; that is, where little or nothing is said in defence or mitigation, yet still it hopes the best that the Matter is capable of: 'Tis pleas'd with the Good it finds in any, and waits for the Amendment of the Bad, and will not despair of the Worst. There are many Examples of great Sinners, that are become great Saints; and whilst the Gates of Mercy are open to all Men, Charity will not shut the Door of Hope against any, much less will it despair of their Salvation, or doom any to eternal Damnation: It will not judg of their final State, nor condemn any before the time; but extends its Hope, as God doth *his Mercy, over all his Works*.

Lastly, *Charity endureth all things*; that is, it is not weary of using all good Means to reclaim them, tho to its own prejudice: It is not discourag'd at any Difficulties for the Good of others, and much less in the Cause of Christ; but undergoes any thing with Patience and Magnanimity for his sake: it faints not under Tribulation, but rather glories in the Cross, than sinks under it; and is so far from repining, that it rejoices in Afflictions in Christ's Service, knowing, that *if we suffer with him, we shall be glorify'd together*. This is the Nature, and these are the Properties of Charity; the Excellence whereof the Apostle proceeds farther to represent,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, By its perpetual and never-ceasing Duration: *Charity* (saith he) *never faileth*. It hath Eternity stamp'd upon it; it will abide with us here, and go along with us hereafter; 'twill accompany us to Heaven, and there make up the greatest part of our Felicity. *But whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; for when they are fulfill'd, they are at an end: Whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; when they have done their Work, and deliver'd their Message, they will be silenc'd: Whether there be Knowledg, it shall vanish away.* The imperfect Knowledg we have of things here, will vanish and be swallow'd up in the Abyss of greater Perfections: *For we know in part now, and prophesy in part, and our best Gifts are attended with Imperfection; But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away: in that perfect State to which Charity leads, all these imperfect Gifts will be of no use, and shall for ever cease.* This the Apostle illustrates by the difference between Childhood and Manhood: *When I was a Child* (saith he) *I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, I thought as a Child; but when I became a Man, I put away childish Things.* In our first Years our Apprehensions of things are weak and childish; but when we come to be Men, our Words, Actions and Inclinations are more manly; insomuch that we speak, act and understand much better than we did before: such and much greater will be the difference between our Condition in this Life and the next; for *now we see thro a Glass darkly, but then Face to Face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.* Here the Images of things are but faintly represented to us, and we have only a Glimpse of them as thro a Glass darkly; but then we shall have more bright and lively Representations of them, and behold them Face to Face: then all Imperfection will be done away, and we shall know God, even as we are known.

Lastly, The Apostle prefers Charity not only above all the Gifts, but above all the Graces of the Spirit; saying in the Close, *Now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity; but the greatest of these is Charity.* Faith and Hope, tho excellent Graces, are yet suited only to this present State, and will both end with this Life; for Faith, which is the Evidence of things not seen, will e'er long yield to Vision; and Hope, which is the Expectation of good things to come, will shortly cease, and be swallow'd up in Fruition: Whereas Charity, which
consists

consists in the Love of God and our Brother, will follow us to Heaven ; and there not only remain, but reign in our Breasts for ever.

Thus we see the Nature and Properties of this Divine and Excellent Grace of Charity ; which, if we set down and consider, we shall see great cause to lament the lack of it in the World : for if we review the sundry Properties of it before-mention'd, and compare them with the Practice of Mens Lives, we shall find reason enough to complain, that the Love of many is waxen cold ; and what our Saviour said of Faith, may be truly affirm'd of Charity, that when the Son of Man cometh, he will scarce find Charity in the Earth. The Scarcity, as well as the Excellency of which Grace, should teach us to hearken to that Exhortation of the Apostle, 1 Pet. 4. 8. *Above all things have fervent Charity among your selves ; for Charity will not only cover a Multitude of Sins in others, but likewise hide a Multitude of our own ; it will draw the Kindness of Heaven upon us, when we are ready to extend it to others : And therefore St. Paul in another place exhorts to the same purpose ; Above all things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection, to fasten all other Graces upon the Soul : Col. 3. 14. In a word, it will establish our Hearts with Grace here, and hereafter bring us to Glory : Which God grant, &c.*



D I S-



DISCOURSE XL.

The G O S P E L for the Sunday call'd *Quinquagesima*, or the next Sunday before *Lent*.

Luke xviii. 31, to the end.

Then Jesus took unto him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man, shall be accomplish'd, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day consists of two Parts: the *first* contains an Account of Christ's going up to *Jerusalem*, and there first acquainting his Apostles with his approaching Death, Passion and Resurrection, with the Circumstances of each. The *Second* contains his going from *Jerusalem* to *Jericho*, and in the way curing a blind Man, restoring his Sight to him by a word's speaking : of each of which particularly.

And, *First*, Of our Saviour's going up to *Jerusalem*, together with the End and Design of it. Of this, the Beginning of the Gospel will inform us; *Then Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplish'd.* Where Jesus assembled the Apostles, to impart something of great weight and consequence to them; which was to acquaint them with his approaching Sufferings, and to prepare them for them: *Behold* (saith he) *we are going up to Jerusalem*, perhaps at one of the great and solemn Festivals, when all the Males were requir'd yearly to repair thither, to worship and offer Sacrifice. When we come there (saith he) *all things that are written by the Prophets of the Son of Man shall be accomplish'd*; meaning, that all the Sufferings which were foretold by the Prophets concerning the Messiah, should come to pass and be fulfill'd in him. That the Messiah was to

to suffer, and die, and rise again, was plainly foretold by many of the Prophets. The Prophet *Isaiah* relates his Sufferings so fully and particularly, that his Account of them seems rather a History of something that was past, than a Prophecy of what was to come; as we see, *Chap. 53.* where he is said to be *despis'd and rejected of Men*, which was verify'd in his own Country-men the *Jews*, who despis'd and rejected him, and pour'd all manner of Contempt upon him. Moreover, he is stil'd there a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; as if all kinds of Evil and Trouble were familiar and ordinary with him. The following Verses of that Chapter speak of his being *wounded and bruised, oppressed, afflicted*; and at last of *his being cut off from the Land of the Living*. And the same was foretold by *Daniel*, *Chap. 9.* And therefore *St. Paul*, in his Defence of this Doctrine, told *Agrippa*, That he said none other things than those, which *Moses and the Prophets* did say should come, that *Christ* should suffer; *Acts 26. 22, 23.* Of these Sufferings, *Christ* began to inform his Disciples, to prevent Surprize, that they might not be startled and offended, when they came. And this he did the rather, because his Sufferings were then drawing on, and his Death was not far off. He knew how difficult a thing it would be to adhere to a crucify'd Saviour, and to expect eternal Life from one that suffer'd so barbarous and ignominious a Death. He was aware how these things might be apt to shake their Faith, and undermine their Hopes in him; and therefore he thought fit to arm them before-hand against these things, by giving them a particular Account of his Death and Resurrection: the Circumstances whereof he tells them in the following Verses, *viz.* that he should be deliver'd unto the Gentiles; that he should be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spit on; that they should scourge him and put him to death, and the third Day he should rise again.

For his Delivery unto the Gentiles, or Heathens, that was fulfill'd by his Delivery to the Roman Power; for *St. Matthew* tells us, he was first betray'd by *Judas* to the chief Priests and Elders, and they deliver'd him to *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Governour.

For his being mock'd, the same Evangelist tells us, how they platted a Crown of Thorns for him, setting it on his Head; and instead of a Scepter put a Reed into his right Hand, and then wagging their Heads in mockery, said to the Multitude, *Hail King of the Jews!* as we read, *Mat. 27.*

FOR

For his being *spitefully entreated and spit on*, that St. *Matthew* and the other Evangelists fully declare; how the *Jews* reproach'd him for all his Miracles, saying, *He sav'd others, himself he cannot save*. And as if he had been the vilest Miscreant upon Earth, the Multitude came about him, and spit in his Face.

For his being *scourg'd*, that always going among the *Romans* before Crucifixion, was likewise with the utmost Rigour executed upon him, as the same Evangelists declare.

For their *putting him to death*, that was the Death of the Cross, which of all the *Roman* ways of Execution, was the most painful and the most ignominious. These and greater Sufferings were by the Prophets foretold concerning the Messiah, all which he tells them, must be accomplish'd in him; and therefore he thought it expedient to tell them these things, before they came to pass, that when they should come to pass they might believe. He took them up to *Jerusalem* with him, there to break these matters to them, and to let them know, that that should be the Stage of his Sufferings, or the Place where this Tragedy was to be acted. *Bethlehem praelegit Nativitati, Hyerosolymam Passioni*: 'twas a Father's Observation, he chose *Bethlehem* a poor, obscure, and unfrequented Village, for his Birth; and *Jerusalem*, a rich, great, and populous City, for his Death. The former was to be private and without Pomp, the latter to be publick before a great Concourse of Spectators and Witnesses.

But because the News of these things might be apt to dismay his Disciples, and to beget in them the greatest Sorrow and Sadness; he adds, in the next words, something for their Comfort, by telling them of his Resurrection; saying, *And the third Day he shall rise again*: meaning, that when they should see him die, they should not be discourag'd, for the Grave should not hold him long, within three Days he would appear alive again, to the Joy of his Friends, and the Terrour of all his and their Enemies. Words full of Comfort, and fraught with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

But what Effect had this Discourse upon the Disciples, or how did these Words take? Why, that the next Verse will tell us: *And they understood none of these things; and this Saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken*: that is, they did in no wise perceive the Sense or Meaning of what he had said unto them. The Evangelist here useth different Words, to express one and the self-

same thing; for he thought it not enough to say, *They understood none of these things*, but adds, that *this Saying was hid from them*; and farther yet, that *they knew not the things that were spoken*: which different Expressions set forth the Grossness and Dulness of their Understandings, either that they could not conceive, or would not believe what he had told them; which made him elsewhere rebuke them, in these words: *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have written! Ought not Christ to have suffer'd these things, and to enter into his Glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself*; Luke 24. 25, 26. Whether this Ignorance of theirs was natural or affected, *i. e.* whether it proceeded from Weakness or Wilfulness, is not here express'd.

The first Expression, that *they understood none of these things*, seems to ascribe it to the Weakness or Slowness of their Understandings. The next, that *this Saying was hid from them*, looks like a judicial Blindness, like that mention'd elsewhere, that in seeing they should see, but not perceive; and in hearing, they should hear, but not understand: But this cannot well be imagin'd of the Apostles of Christ. The last Expression may give us the best Light herein, *They knew not the things that were spoken*; that is, they knew them not at first hearing, till they were after explain'd to them, they knew them not so readily and so fully as they did after. This seems to agree with the Account given of St. Peter in this matter, *Mat. 16. 21, 22.* where we read, that when Jesus began to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders, Chief Priests, and Scribes, and be kill'd and be rais'd again the third Day; Peter rebuk'd him, saying, *Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.* By which words it appears, that he understood nothing of the Nature, Necessity, or End of Christ's Sufferings; for if he had, he would not have said, *Be that far from thee*, which alone could bring us nigh unto God; or God forbid that that should happen unto thee, which God had decreed should be for the Salvation of Mankind. Which Error of St. Peter made our Saviour sharply rebuke him, saying, *Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an Offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men*; thy Mind and Affections are still groveling

ling upon the Earth, and are not yet rais'd to more heavenly Objects.

The Truth of this Matter was, that the Disciples had so possess'd their Minds with the Thoughts and Expectations of earthly Greatness, by the Coming of the Messiah, that they could not think or hear of Sufferings. This made him often speak of his own Sufferings, and of their taking up the Cross and following him, to wean them from all aspiring Thoughts, and to confute the Opinion they had entertain'd of his temporal Kingdom. When the Mother of *Zebedees* Children came to him, with her two Sons, desiring that the one might sit on his right Hand, and the other on his left, in his Kingdom, he told her, that she knew not what she ask'd; and thence took occasion to ask, whether they could drink of the Cup that he was to drink of, meaning the bitter Cup of his Passion, and be baptiz'd with the Baptism of Blood that he was to be baptiz'd with. If they could, they might meet with such things, as he did in this World; but for sitting at his right Hand or left, that belong'd only to such as shall be prepar'd for it by his Father in his Heavenly Kingdom: which things he said unto them, merely to take them off from all vain Conceits of worldly Greatness, and to let them know, that he came not to prefer them in this World, but in the next. And yet this false and foolish Notion of earthly Preferments by him, had got such a fast hold of the Minds even of the Apostles themselves, that 'twas a long time before they could rid themselves of it; for we find them after his Death thus bemoaning themselves, *We trusted that it had been he that should have redeem'd Israel*, *Luke 24. 21.* meaning, that they look'd to be freed by him from the *Roman* Yoke, and to be restor'd to their antient Liberty and Glory, of which his Death had cut off all their Hopes: yea, we find them, after his Resurrection from the Dead, asking of him, and saying, *Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* *Acts 1. 6.* so fond were they of worldly Prosperity, that their Minds seem'd to run upon little else. And this was the true reason, why when our Saviour told them of his approaching Sufferings, to prepare them for his Death, which was then at hand, they could not or would not understand any of those things. This is the first Part of the Gospel for this Day; from whence I proceed to the

Second, which contains our Saviour's going from *Jerusalem* to *Jericho*, and in his way curing a blind Man, by restoring his Sight to him; an Account of which we have in the next Verse to the end of the Chapter: it begins thus, *And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind Man sat by the way-side begging; and hearing the Multitude pass by, he ask'd what it meant; and they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by: and he cry'd, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.* St. *Matthew* relating this same Story, tells us of two blind Men sitting by the way-side begging, and hearing of Jesus passing by, put up the same Petition, saying, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us: Mat. 20. 30.* St. *Mark*, in relating of it, mentions but one, as St. *Luke* here does, and that his Name was *Bartimeus*, the Son of *Timeus*, known by the name of blind *Bartimeus*, *Mark 10. 46.* But however that be, it matters not much, Christ being as well able to cure two as one: They all agree in the Substance of the Story, that upon Jesus's passing by, the blind Man cry'd out, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me; but they that were with him, or went before him, rebuk'd him, that he should hold his peace; fearing, that his frequent Crying might be displeasing to him: but instead of silencing, he cry'd so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.* Jesus, taken with the Importunity and the Strength of his Faith, stood still, and commanded him to be brought unto him. When he was come near to him, he ask'd him, saying, *What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* Very comfortable words to a poor Man! He reply'd unto him, *Lord, that I may receive my Sight.* Jesus commiserating the want of that useful Sense, and the Miseries of Blindness, said unto him, *Receive thy Sight, thy Faith hath sav'd thee: Upon which words he immediately receiv'd his Sight, and follow'd him, glorifying God.* So powerful is the Word of God, as to give Sight to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, yea, and Life to the Dead; and no wonder, for he that could speak all things into Being by the Breath of his Mouth, may be easily suppos'd able to do such inferiour things. St. *John* relates our Saviour's curing a blind Man, by anointing his Eyes with Clay and Spittle, things more likely to put out the Eyes, than to give Sight to them, to shew that God can work with any means, or no means; as it pleaseth him, *John 9. 6.* But what was the Effect of this

this Miracle wrought on the blind Man? Why, a very good one, for he follow'd Christ, and glorify'd God. The opening his bodily Eyes, open'd the Eyes of his Understanding; and the curing his natural Blindness, heal'd the spiritual Blindness of his Mind: for he saw clearer into the things of God, which made him a Follower of Christ, and to give Glory to his Maker; *And all the People, when they saw it, join'd with him in giving Praise unto God.*

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day, which may teach us a few Lessons. And,

1st, From Christ's declaring his Sufferings beforehand, we may learn to count upon and prepare for Afflictions, which will come whilst we remain in this Vale of Misery. The Sting and Bitterness of any Affliction is Surprise, or its coming upon us unawares; for then it finds us naked and defenceless: but when we are forewarn'd, we are forearm'd against it, and may summon all the Succours of Reason and Religion to withstand or weaken it; and therefore we should, as the Mariners do, count upon a Storm in the midst of a Calm, to be the better provided for it when it comes.

2^{ly}, From the Apostles Backwardness to believe our Saviour's Passion, we may learn our great Unwillingness to hear of or bear Afflictions. All Sufferings are against the grain of Nature, and give no small disturbance to it; which makes all Men naturally to decline and shrink from them. This mov'd our Saviour to acquaint his Disciples with his own and their Sufferings, that he was to drink of the bitter Cup of God's Wrath, which would not altogether pass from them, without tasting of it; for if any will be my Disciple (saith he) he must deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me, 'Tis thro many Tribulations that we are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and if we bear them patiently and thankfully, these light Afflictions, that are but for a moment, will work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory; 2 Cor. 4.

3^{ly}, We learn from hence, that 'tis a too great Fondness and Love of this World that makes Men unwilling to hear of or bear the Sufferings of this Life. The Jews dreaming of the temporal Kingdom of the Messias, and expecting earthly Greatness and Preferments from him, made them despise a suffering Saviour; and the Disciples themselves, being a little tainted with that Itch of Ambition and world-

ly Hopes, made them uneasy under that melancholy Account that Christ gave of his approaching Death and Passion: Which should teach us to wean our Minds more and more from this World, and to fix them on the transcendent Joys and Happiness of the next; and then we shall find that the Sufferings of this present Life are not worthy to be nam'd or compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us.

4ly, From Christ's curing the blind Man, that cry'd after him, we learn his Readiness to hear the Prayers of the Miserable and Afflicted: *The Poor crieth* (saith the Psalmist) *and the Lord hearèth him, and delivereth him out of all his Trouble.* Whatever our Malady or Distress be, we see, if we have recourse unto God by earnest and importunate Prayer, we shall be heard and reliev'd; *The effectual fervent Prayer of the Righteous* (saith St. James) *prevaileth much.* Christ himself hath told us, that if we ask, we shall receive; and if we knock at the Gates of Mercy, they will be open'd us: but then we must ask in Faith, nothing wavering. 'Twas the blind Man's Faith that recover'd his Sight, so our Saviour told him, *Thy Faith hath sav'd thee*; and we must have the same Faith and Confidence in God, if we hope to be heard and succeed in our Petitions.

Lastly, From the blind Man's praising and glorifying God upon the Recovery of his Sight, we learn to give Thanks and Praise unto him for all the Mercies we receive; they all proceed from his Bounty, and therefore ought to be own'd and receiv'd with thankful Hearts: which should teach us, upon all occasions, to put up that pious and pithy Ejaculation, saying, *The Lord be prais'd.* Amen.



DISCOURSE XLI.

The EPISTLE for the First Day of *Lent*,
commonly call'd *Ash-Wednesday*.

Joel ii. 12——18.

Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, with all your Heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning: and rend your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious, &c.

THE Collect for this Day, which begins the Great Fast of *Lent*, teaches us to pray to Almighty God, who hateth nothing that he hath made, but forgives the Sins of all that are penitent, to create and make in us new and contrite Hearts; that we worthily lamenting our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretchedness, may obtain of him, the God of all Mercy, perfect Remission and Forgiveness. For the better obtaining of these Requests,

The Epistle for the Day contains a Call to the great Duties of Repentance, Fasting and Prayer, together with the Manner, the Motives, the End, and the Encouragements to the doing of them.

It begins with a Call to Repentance, in these words, *Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord.* Where the Prophet Joel brings in God Almighty summoning Sinners to return to him, from whom they had gone astray; for Returning supposes a Revolt, and few Persons will think of returning, till they are sensible of their being out of the way. The Occasion of this Call was from the sore Judgments that had already befallen the *Jews*, and the Fears and Threatnings of many more; the Abuse of their Plenty was punish'd with a Famine, and their Transgressions were threaten'd with the Fire and the Sword, and were like to bring the sorest Judgments upon them. In this miserable Con-

dition God is pleas'd: to call them to Repentance, the only Remedy to remove their present Evils; and to prevent future and far greater Calamities. And this is express'd here by turning unto God, that is, from the Love and Practice of Sin, to their Duty and Obedience to their Maker. For Sin is the cause of all Sufferings and Calamities, and we must eschew the one, before we can hope to escape the other. So our Saviour told the Paralytick, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.* And because God is the sole Author of all Safety and Deliverance, we must not only turn from Sin, the Source of all Evil, but likewise turn unto God, the Fountain of all Good. And this turning from Sin must be universal, from all Sin, without the least reserve of kindness for any; and it must be constant, that is, always, without turning again to Folly.

But how are we to *turn unto God*? Why, the Manner of it is declar'd in the next words; it must be *with all our heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning*: Of each briefly. And,

1st, It must be with all the Heart; which denotes both the Sincerity of it, it must be with *the Heart*; and likewise the Integrity of it, with *all* the Heart. What comes from the Heart (you know) is sound and sincere; but what comes from the Lips only, is deceitful and hypocritical. Hence we find God Almighty complaining of some, that *drew nigh him with their Lips, when their Hearts were far from him*; Isa. 29. 13. And of others, that *came and sat before him as his People, when their Hearts were all the while after their Covetousness.* They seem'd to turn unto God by all the outward Signs of Piety and Devotion, but there was nothing within but Falshood and Hypocrisy. Such turning is but a mocking of God, and instead of turning away his Wrath, will but more highly increase and incense it. And therefore our turning to God must be with the Heart, to make it sincere, and likewise with all the Heart, to make it intire: it must not be shar'd between God and Mammon, he will have the whole Heart, not a piece; for tho he loves a broken, yet he hates a double and divided Heart. And therefore our Saviour wills us to *love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Strength.* By thus turning to him, he will turn unto us, and turn away his whole Displeasure from us.

Again,

Again, *2dly*, Our turning to God must be *with Fasting*. This is a Duty frequently enjoyn'd in Holy Scripture, and practis'd by holy Men in all Ages: 'tis mostly join'd with Prayer, and both together make a holy and acceptable Sacrifice; for upon the wings of Prayer and Fasting the Soul infallibly mounts up to Heaven. Fasting starves many a Vice, and so prevents much Evil; 'tis a great Instrument and Incentive to Vertue, and thereby procures much Good. It mightily helps our Devotion, by removing the Clogs and Hindrances of it; it subdues the Flesh to the Spirit, and by keeping under the Body, raises and elevates the Soul. We read, our Blessed Saviour fasted forty Days and forty Nights before his Combat with the Devil, *Mat. 4. 2.* from whose Example the Church appointed the *Lenten* Fast; which requires not a total Abstinence from all Meats, for that our Nature and the necessary Cravings of it cannot bear; but an Abstinence for some time from all high and pampering Food, to mortify the Flesh, that it may the better attend to the Motions of God's holy Spirit. Luxury and high Feeding made the prodigal Son wanton, and leave his Father's House; and nothing but Hunger and homely Diet made him to come to himself, and think of returning to his Father. And therefore Fasting is here requir'd of us, in order to our turning unto God.

3dly, We are call'd upon to turn unto God *with Weeping*: that is, with the Tears of godly Sorrow and Contrition, bewailing our Folly in going astray from him like lost Sheep, and seeking to repair it by a speedy returning to the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls. The Sense of our Sins should draw Tears from our Eyes to wash off their Guilt, and to cleanse us from their Defilement. *Peter* wept bitterly for denying his Master, and the Prophet *Jeremy* wish'd his Eyes a Fountain of Tears. Not that actual Weeping is always absolutely necessary to Repentance or Salvation; for some by reason of the Dryness of their Constitution cannot shed Tears, when perhaps their Sorrow is the deeper for want of that Vent; but the meaning here is, that we be inwardly touch'd and afflicted with the Sense of our Misdoings, as those are that use to lament and cry for them: And if we are so, we may be said inwardly to weep and bleed, without shedding of Tears; and that will be as acceptable unto God, as the loudest Weeping and Wailing.

4thly, We are bid to turn unto God *with Mourning*; which being mention'd apart from Weeping, must be understood

derstood of some other outward Signs and Tokens of Mourning, of which we read of many in Holy Scripture; as of *girding with Sackcloth*, of *sprinkling the Head with Ashes*, and *spreading Ashes under them*. Isa. 58. 5. Jer. 6. 26. Dan. 9. 3. And this gave the Name of *Ashwednesday* to this Day, from the antient Custom of sprinkling Ashes on the Head, and wearing Sack-cloth on it. There were likewise other Marks of Mourning and Humiliation, as tearing the Hair, uncovering the Head and Feet, rending the Clothes, and the like, to which the Prophets were wont to call the People upon solemn and extraordinary Occasions.

But lest the People should rest or rely too much upon these outward Rites or Tokens of Mourning, the Prophet here calls upon them, in the next words, *Rend your Hearts, and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God*. Where the Prophet alludes to the antient Practice of rending the Garments in token of mourning; and that they might not lay too great a stress upon that, or any other outward Sign of Sorrow, he wills them to look chiefly within, and consult more the breaking of the Heart, than the tearing of their Clothes: for godly Sorrow consists not in torn and ragged Apparel, but in a broken and contrite Heart; and the best Attire of the Soul, is not to be clad in Rags, but to be clothed with Humility. The rending of the Garments was an Emblem of a Heart torn with Sorrow, and was an outward Expression of the highest inward Grief; and therefore the *Jewish* Doctors order'd it, never to be used but upon the Death of Parents or Princes, or in some great and common Calamities. And yet this alone was not sufficient; for the tearing of their Garments was in God's sight no better than Hypocrisy, without that Repentance and Contrition of Heart, which it was design'd to represent. *Rend therefore your Hearts* (saith the Prophet) *and not your Garments*; that is, rather than your Garments, for so the manner of expressing it signifies in Scripture: *I will have Mercy* (saith God) *and not Sacrifice*; that is, rather than Sacrifice. So that the Sense here is, “Rend not your Garments only, but your Hearts also;” “and let your principal Care be about this, without which” “the other will be of no avail. Think not then (as one” “paraphrases this place) to please God with a Sorrow that” “goes no nearer to you than the Borders of your Gar-” “ment; let it pierce deeper, and enter the Heart: and” “by

“ by so turning to the Lord your God, he will turn to
“ you, and receive you in the Arms of his Mercy.”

And this will lead me, from the Manner, to the Motives and Encouragements hereunto, in the following words; *For God is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.* Where every word speaks nothing but Comfort, and is a powerful Attractive and Invitation to bring us to him.

He is gracious, free of Access, and willing to give us a hearty Welcome, ready to shew Favour, and to impart his Grace and Goodness to us.

He is merciful, full of Compassion and Pity to all that are in Misery; he stands not upon high or hard Terms, nor uses any Rigour towards us, but gives all reasonable Allowances, and is willing to forgive.

He is slow to Anger, not easily provok'd, nor forward to punish, but inclin'd to forbear and expect Amendment, and even waiting to be gracious. He gives frequent warnings before he strikes; and when Mens Iniquities force him, his Bowels yearn, and turn within him.

He is of great Kindness, even to those that have offended, being ready to be reconcil'd, and far more desirous to spare than to punish.

He repenteth him of the Evil; not that there is any Change in him, but because we change from worse to better; then he changes the Course he threatned, but not his Mind, which was ever to punish the Obstinate, and to spare the Penitent. Indeed, God cannot be properly said to *repent*, for that supposes the knowledg of something after, of which he was ignorant before, and that occasions a Change of the Mind thereupon; none of which may be thought or affirm'd of God, who is both omniscient and unchangeable. When repenting is any time ascrib'd to him, it must be understood as spoken after the manner of Men, that we may be the better mov'd and affected towards him, by what we find and feel within our selves. Because when we alter from a thing which we before resolv'd on, we are said to repent of it, therefore when God desists from any Evil, which he before threatned, he is likewise said to repent of it; tho' the thing imply a Change in us, who are therefore properly said to repent; but none at all in God, and therefore improperly ascrib'd to him. However, the Prophet mentions it here as an Encouragement to turn to him; for tho' his
Justice

Justice require him to publish his Anger against Sin, yet his Mercy is ever ready to embrace all Opportunities of laying it aside. And therefore let not the greatest Offenders despair, or be discourag'd from going to him by Prayer and Amendment. For

Who knoweth if he will return and repent of the Evil he purpos'd to inflict, when we repent of the Evil that we have done ? The Mercies of God are both sure and secret ; and tho the Conditions of Mercy are publish'd to all, yet the Persons that perform them are known only to him : and whatever Discouragements your own Hearts, and those that wish you evil may suggest to you, who knows but that you may so far appease his Wrath, as to cause him to *leave a Blessing behind him* ; even such a one as may turn your present Want and Scarcity into such a Plenty, as may afford you not only enough to supply your Necessities, but to make a *Meat-Offering and a Drink-Offering*, as an Oblation of Thankfulness *unto the Lord your God* ?

From these great Motives and Encouragements, the Prophet proceeds to call these *Israelites*, in their present Distress, to keep a solemn Fast unto the Lord, for the better obtaining of these Blessings.

This is the Design of the following words ; *Blow the Trumpet in Zion, sanctify a Fast, call a solemn Assembly, gather the People, sanctify the Congregation, assemble the Elders, &c.* Where,

1st, The *blowing of the Trumpet in Zion*, relates to the Custom of the Jews, grounded upon the Command of God given to *Moses*, to *blow the Trumpet, to assemble the People at the Door of the Congregation*, as we read, *Numb. 10. 3.* Some Signal (you know) must be given, to call People together upon the solemn Occasions of Divine Worship : and what is now done by us by the sounding of a Bell, was then perform'd by them by the sounding of a Trumpet ; and to this the Prophet here refers, by *blowing the Trumpet in Zion*.

2^{dly}, The *sanctifying of a Fast*, is the setting apart of some time for that purpose, and dedicating it to the Ends of Mourning and Prayer. Sanctifying in Scripture, when apply'd to Times and Places, signifies the separating them from common Uses to sacred and holy Purposes ; such was the sanctifying of the Sabbath, and the Temple, and such likewise is the sanctifying of a Fast.

3dly, *The calling of a solemn Assembly*, may signify not a common or ordinary Meeting, as at other times, but a more publick and general Assembly, call'd together for some more solemn Service, and upon more than ordinary Occasions.

4thly, *The gathering of the People*, implies the bringing of all sorts of Persons together, to attend this more solemn Service; that they may be directed in their Duty, and join together in the Acts of Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer, for the averting of Judgments, and procuring of all manner of needful and desirable Blessings.

5thly, *The sanctifying of the Congregation*, signifies the preparing and purifying of them before-hand, that they may come with pure Hearts, and lift up clean Hands unto the Lord; according to the Command given to Moses, *Exod. 19. 10. Go unto the People, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their Clothes, and let them be ready against the third Day. And ver. 22. Let the Priests also, that come near unto the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.*

6thly, *The assembling of the Elders*, is the calling together of the Priests and Levites, the Princes and Governours, that all may join in these devout and holy Exercises.

And that none may absent themselves upon any pretence of Children, 'tis added, *Gather the Children, and those that suck the Breasts*; that they may learn betimes the way that they should go, and be brought up in the Fear, Nurture, and Admonition of the Lord.

Furthermore, 'tis added, *Let the Bridegroom go forth of his Chamber, and the Bride out of her Closet*: that is, either let them leave their private Retirements, and come forth to attend the publick Devotion; or else let them abstain from all carnal Pleasures and Delights, during the days of Mourning and Fasting.

Lastly, *The Priests and Ministers of the Lord* are bid to weep between the Porch and the Altar, and to say, *Spare thy People, O Lord.* From hence 'tis suppos'd the Church took occasion in Cathedrals to sing or say the Litany in the midst of the Church, between the Door of Entrance into the Quire and the Communion-Table; where the Priests between the Porch and the Altar are wont to say, *Spare us good Lord, and be not angry with us for ever.* To which the Prophet, here deprecating the Famine that was then upon them, adds, *And give not thine Heritage to Reproach,*
that

that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, Where is their God? that is, as some translate it, let not the Nations mock and make a By-word of thine own People, who are constrain'd thro' Want to become subject to Strangers, having no means to support or defend themselves from them; which they therefore with Fasting and Mourning humbly implore, lest the Heathen should proceed farther, even to mock and blaspheme God, and say in derision, Where is now their God?

Thus I have briefly set before you the Sense and Substance of this Day's Epistle, which you see is a Call to Repentance, Fasting and Prayer: all which are more especially to be minded and practis'd on this Day, which the Fathers call *Caput Jejunii*, the Head or Beginning of the great Fast of *Lent*, and was by the Church appointed as a Day of extraordinary Humiliation; when beside the general Call to Repentance and Mortification in which all were concern'd, there was likewise a godly Discipline exercis'd upon all notorious Offenders, who were then censur'd and turn'd out of the Church; and so strictly avoided by all Christians, that the poor Penitents finding no Succour, were forc'd by Shame and Fear to quit their evil Ways, and gladly submitted to long and severe Penances as Tokens of their Sorrow and Reformation, in order to their Restoration.

This godly Discipline our Church wishes might be restor'd; but our unhappy Schisms and Dissensions render it in vain to hope it in this untoward and untractable Generation; and therefore in the mean time it advises all Men to judg themselves by the Law of God, that hearing or reading the Curses denounc'd therein against impenitent Sinners, and giving their Assent by saying *Amen* to them, they may see their Guilt and their Danger, and by both be persuaded to the only Remedy of Repentance to escape them.

And therefore to draw to a Conclusion, let us, from what hath been said, learn,

1st, To turn unto God with full Purpose of Heart, whose Arms are wide open to receive and embrace us. Our Misery is great enough to excite, and his Mercy is far greater to invite us to him; he is slow to Anger, and of great Pity, backward to punish, but very forward to pardon: And what can we, who have sinn'd against him, do better, than with bended Knees and Hearts rent with Sorrow implore his Mercy, and ask his Pardon? Who can think of such a
tender

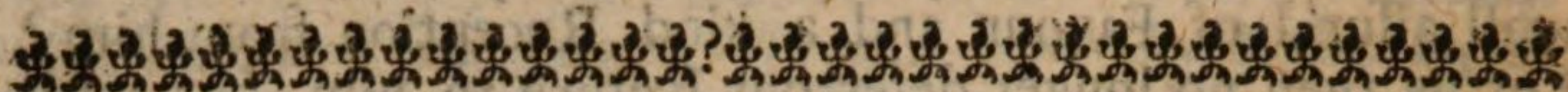
tender Father without running to him, when we are so well assur'd of Favour and a kind Reception from him? Let us then no longer defer our Return to him, but with the prodigal Son go to him and say, *Father, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be call'd thy Sons.* And if with penitent Hearts we thus come to him, we shall be receiv'd not as Servants but Sons, and be admitted to the Portion and Inheritance of Children.

Lastly, Let us learn from hence religiously to observe the stated and solemn Seasons of Fasting and Prayer. This, we see, is strictly enjoin'd us by God himself merely for our own good, it being the best means of removing Judgments from us, and procuring Blessings to us. Fasting is sometimes Physick for the Body, by giving Nature time to work off the present Burdens that lie upon it, without loading it farther; but 'tis more especially design'd for the Welfare of the Soul, to fit it for the Service of God, by removing the Clogs and Hindrances of it, and to dispose it for receiving the Graces of God's Holy Spirit, for which Surfeiting and Excess utterly unfit it.

In a word, this Season being appointed for Contrition and Mortification, let us spend it in Acts of Self-denial, and more than ordinary Devotion, that by the holy Exercises of *Lent* we may be the better prepar'd for the Communion at *Easter*: which God grant, &c.



D I S-



DISCOURSE XLII.

The GOSPEL for the First Day of Lent,
commonly call'd *Ash-Wednesday*.

St. Matthew vi. 16——21.

When ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance; for they disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their Reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy Head and wash thy Face, that thou appear not to Men to fast, but unto thy Father, &c.

THE whole Service of this Day, which is the Beginning of *Lent*, calls us to the great Duty of Fasting; of which we have had some account in the Epistle for the Day, taken out of the Prophecy of *Joel*. But this being a very useful Instrument of Religion, and necessary to the obtaining of Mercy and Pardon, 'twill be requisite a little farther to explain and exhort to it; which I shall do from the Gospel for the Day, taken out of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount: where, in the foregoing Verses of this Chapter, he directs his Followers to the three great Duties of Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting; in all which he cautions them against the Vanity and Ostentation of Hypocrites, who did all their good Works only to be seen of Men; and instead of that, presses to a sincere and secret Performance of them, which can alone approve them to God and Men.

When thou doest thine Alms (saith he) do not as the Hypocrites do; for they sound a Trumpet before them, that they may have Glory from Men: ver. 2. When thou prayest, be not like the Hypocrites, for they love to pray in the Synagogues and Corners of the Streets, to be seen of Men: ver. 5. And here he gives the same Advice concerning Fasting: When ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance; for they
disfigure

disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. Where we have,

First, The Duty of Fasting suppos'd; *When ye fast*.

Secondly, The Manner of performing this Duty aright; express'd, 1st, Negatively; *Be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance*. And, 2dly, Positively; *but anoint thy Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not to Men to fast*. And lastly, the Reward that will attend so doing; *Thy Father that seeth in secret will reward thee openly*.

Thirdly, That some Times and Seasons are to be allotted or appointed for it, imply'd in the same words, *When ye fast*; which supposes some time. For the

First, The Duty enjoin'd is Fasting; *When ye fast*. Now Fasting is a Religious Duty, that consists in the abstaining from all, or some sorts of Meat, for a certain season, for the humbling of the Body, and for the Health and Welfare of the Soul. Of each of these briefly. And,

1. I stile it a Duty; for the many Precepts and Examples of it in Holy Scripture plainly shew it to be so. God Almighty commanded the *Israelites* to afflict their Souls by a Statute for ever, Lev. 16. 31. And that was to be done by Fasting, Sackcloth, and Ashes, to which he expressly call'd them, as we read, Isa. 22. 12. and Chap. 58. 5. The Prophet *Zechariah* makes mention of the *Fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth Month*, Zech. 8. 19. Our Saviour fasted before his Conflict with the Devil, Mat. 4. and elsewhere told his Disciples, that some unclean Spirits cannot be cast out but by Prayer and Fasting. *Anna* is commended for serving God with Fasting and Prayer day and night, Luke 2. 37. All which, and many more places to the same purpose, shew it to be a great and necessary Duty.

2. I stile it a Religious Duty, to distinguish it from a Physical Fast, prescrib'd for the preventing or removing any bodily Distemper; and likewise from a Civil and Political Fast, design'd only for the better Increase of Cattel, and promoting a greater Plenty. Whereas the Fast here treated of is more spiritual, viz. a Fast from all Sin and Wickedness, to beget in us such a Sense of the Evil and Danger of them, as may make us not only loath, but leave them: which things being taught and commanded of God, make it a Religious Duty:

3. I stile it a Duty that consists in abstaining from all Meat, if it be possible; if not, from those sorts that are more delicious and heightning: and both for a certain Season. But here it may be ask'd, How often, and how long are we to abstain from these things? In answer to which, in our private Fasts being left to our own liberty, we may allot so much of our Time to this purpose, as our Health, and other necessary Affairs and Duties will allow. But in publick Fasts, being to be directed by Superiors, we are to observe the Time appointed by Authority, be it more or less. If a Day be set apart to afflict our Soul, we are religiously to observe it, and to abstain from our natural Food till the Evening. If it be for a longer Time, that must be observ'd likewise; as in *Esther's* Fast, where the People were commanded, upon an extraordinary Occasion, *not to eat or drink for three Days*; *Esther* 4. 16. If it be for Weeks, or a longer Season, as the *Lent-Fast*, wherein the Frailty of our Natures will not admit of a total Abstinence, there the antient Piety of former Christians taught them to abstain from all high and pampering Diet; and particularly, from Flesh, which administers Fuel to mens Lusts, and to confine themselves to Fish, Herbs, and the like: which affording only a cold, weak, and watery Nourishment, are not so apt to inflame, nor to make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof.

4. I stile it an Abstinence for the humbling of the Body, and for the Health and Welfare of the Soul: this directs us in the true Ends of Fasting; which are not for *Strife and Debate, to smite with the Fist of Wickedness, and to make the Voice to be heard on high*, as God complains of some, *Isa.* 58. 4. nor yet for Vain-Glory and Oppression, to be seen of Men, and to enrich themselves upon the Spoils of their Neighbours; as our Saviour speaks of the *Pharisees*, who *fasted, and made long Prayers*, merely to devour *Widows Houses*, and to make a Prey of others: much less for wicked and worldly Ends, to vent their Spleen, and carry on their evil and malicious Designs, as *Jezabel* proclaim'd a Fast to carry on the Murder of *Naboth*, and to seize his Vineyard; and we have known some, who have done the same for the Success of a Civil War against their Prince, and to promote Rebellion and Regicide. These are the vile and detestable Ends that some Men propound to themselves in this Duty of Fasting: but the true Ends are,

1st, For the humbling of the Body, and keeping it in Subjection, that it may not rebel against the Spirit, nor suffer Sin to reign in it. So St. Paul, who was in *Fastings often*, tells us, that he thereby *kept under his Body, and brought it into Subjection*; 1 Cor. 9. 27. High feeding and feasting is apt to pamper the Body, and make it let loose the Reins to all inordinate Motions; for which reason we are bid to *take heed, lest at any time our Hearts be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness*, Luke 21. 34. whereas fasting suppresses those fleshly Lusts that war against the Soul, and gives it Wings that mount it above all sensual Pleasures and Delights. And so leads to the

2d End of Fasting, viz. the Health and Welfare of the Soul; for it fits it for God's Service, and disposes it for all other Duties, and therefore is highly acceptable unto God, and profitable to our own Salvation. Thus having shew'd the Nature, the Necessity, and the Usefulness of Fasting, I proceed, as the Gospel directs us, to consider,

Secondly, The Manner or right Way of performing it; express'd here,

1st, Negatively; When ye fast, *be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance*; for they disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. Where our Saviour condemns all hypocritical and formal Fasting, and particularly that of the Pharisees; who when they fasted were wont to look very dejectedly, and to put on a sad Countenance: the word in the Original is *συνθεσσωσι*, which, as one interprets it, is to look like Scythians, with a heavy and dismal Aspect; and this they did to shew the seeming Strictness and Austerity of their Religion. Yea, our Saviour adds, that they did *disfigure their Faces*; the original words are *ἀφανίζουσιν τὰ πρόσωπα*, which signify, either their covering their Faces with a black Veil, or their using a Paint or Fucus, to make them look sad and mortified; and both, that they might appear unto Men to fast: by which they only sought Vain-Glory and the Praise of Men, and that render'd them vile and odious in the eyes of God; for God looketh not, as Man looketh, on the outward Appearance, but beholds the Heart; and what is many times highly esteemed among Men, is an Abomination to the Lord; Luke 16. 15. Of this kind was the Fasting so sharply reprov'd in the Israelites, who bowed down their Heads like a Bulrush, and spread Sackcloth and Ashes under them; and at the same time violated the

weightier Duties, of Justice and Mercy : for which God upbraided them by the Prophet, in these words ; *Is this the Fast I have chosen ? and will ye call this a Fast, or an acceptable Day unto the Lord ?* Isa. 58. 6. Meaning, that this was so far from being pleasing to him, that his Soul abhorr'd such false and feigned Offerings. This was the Fasting of the *Pharisees* and Hypocrites here rebuk'd by our Saviour. And much like it have been the Mock-Fasts of some designing Men among us ; who by feigned Humiliations and long Prayers, have mocked God, and stirr'd up his Indignation against us.

Verily, I say unto you, (saith our Saviour) they have their Reward. They courted only the vain Breath of the Multitude, and that is all the Reward they have here, and they shall dearly rue for it hereafter. From this false, I proceed,

2dly, To the true and sincere way of Fasting, prescrib'd by our Saviour, in these words : *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not to Men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret.* Anointing the Head and washing the Face, were look'd upon as Tokens of Joy among the *Jews*, and were therefore us'd at Feasts and Festivals ; but never at Fasts or Times of Mourning. *Solomon* bid them at Feasts, to *eat their Bread with Joy, and drink their Wine with a merry Heart ; to let their Garments be always white, and to let their Heads lack no Ointment ;* Eccles. 9. 7, 8. But in their Fasts they were to abstain as much from anointing and washing, as from eating and drinking. Hence *Daniel* declares, in his fasting, that *he eat no pleasant Bread, neither came Flesh or Wine into his Mouth, neither did he anoint himself at all, till the three whole Weeks were fulfilled ;* Dan. 10. 2, 3. *David*, when he made an end of mourning, *arose, and washed and anointed himself, and eat Bread ;* 2 Sam. 12. 20. to signify, that the omitting of these, was a Ceremony that accompanied Fasting and Mourning. Accordingly we read of the Widow of *Tekoa*, that to feign her self a Mourner, she was bid to put on mourning Apparel, and not to anoint her self with Oil ; 2 Sam. 14. 2. By these Ceremonies, Fasts were distinguish'd from Festivals ; and by abstaining from washing and anointing, Men were known when they fasted. Now the *Pharisees* were strict Observers of these outward Ceremonies, for they would neither anoint nor wash, that People might see and know when they fasted ; tho at the same time they had no regard to the inward Humiliation of

of the Heart : for which reason our Saviour check'd their Hypocrisy, and advis'd his Followers not to affect any such outward Show and Ostentation, but in their Fasting to appear in their ordinary guise ; that they might not appear to Men to fast, but to God only : yea, to anoint their Head, rather than to hang it down like a Bulrush ; and rather to wash their Face, than suffer it to look black and dismal.

So that the great Lesson here taught us, is Sincerity ; that in this and all other religious Duties, we endeavour not so much to recommend our selves unto Men, by any outward shows of Sadness, as to approve our selves unto God by the inward Sorrow and Humility of the Heart. And to that end, we should not put on sad Countenances and pensive Looks, as the Hypocrites do, but anoint and wash, as at other times ; and put on the Garments of Praise, rather than the Spirit of Heaviness. Thus we see the Nature of Fasting, together with the right Way and Manner of performing it.

Thirdly, But the Phrase here, *When ye fast*, supposes some particular and solemn Seasons to be set apart for that purpose, *Solomon* tells us, that *there is a time for all things, a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to sing ; and that all things are beautiful in their Season.* Fasting then and Mourning, must have their Times and Seasons, as well as Mirth and Rejoicing. And when is that ? Why,

1. When any Judgment is impending over, or incumbent upon us, then is a proper time for Fasting and Prayer, that God would be pleas'd to prevent or remove it : When *Israel* was in Danger of Invasion, and great Perplexity and Distress beset *Jerusalem* ; *In that Day* (saith the Prophet) *did God call to weeping and mourning, and girding with Sackcloth ;* Isa. 22. 12. The Rod hath a Voice as well as a Smart ; and 'tis our Wisdom to hearken to the one, when we feel the other : so we are directed, *Hear the Rod and him that appointed it.* If God hath afflicted any private Person with any particular Calamity, as Trouble of Mind, Sickness of Body, Loss of Friends or Goods, or any other Adversity, then is that Person call'd to private Fasting and Prayer, to humble himself before God, to bewail his Sins, and to deprecate the Evils he hath deserv'd. Again, when God finds it necessary to punish a whole Nation or Country

try with any publick Judgment, as War, Pestilence, Famine, or the like; then does he call them to publick Fasting and Humiliation, to turn from their Sins, and return to him that smites them. In this, both the Precepts of Scripture and the Practice of all wise Nations, may fully satisfy us.

2. Another Season of Fasting is, when we are entering upon any great, weighty, or difficult Enterprize. Thus when *Esther* sought to pacify the Anger of *Ahasuerus*, and to save the *Jews* from Destruction, she, and all the People, kept a solemn Fast, *Esther* 4. 16. When our Saviour was about to encounter the Devil, he prepar'd himself by fasting, *Mat.* 4. 2. not that he needed any such help, but to give us an Example to do likewise. When the Apostles were to ordain Persons to succeed in the Work of the Ministry, they fasted and prayed, *Acts* 13. 2, 3. This is the ground of observing *Ember-Weeks*, when Fasting and Praying have, from the Apostles time, been us'd in the Church, as preparatory to the Laying on of Hands. In short, in all our Humiliations and great Undertakings, Fasting is to be join'd with Prayer: for as all things are sanctified by Prayer, so does Fasting help to quicken our Prayers; and both together are very prevalent with God, for the obtaining of his Mercy and Blessing. And this will lead us, in the next place, to the Reward here promis'd to the sincere and secret Performance of this Duty, in these words;

And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. The Sense whereof is, that God, who knows the Heart, will never forget this Labour of Love, how secretly soever it may be perform'd, but will signally and surely reward it in the View of all Men.

Now the Rewards of Fasting are partly in this Life, but chiefly in that which is to come. In this Life, we read of many Blessings and Successes that have attended it. *Ahab's* Punishment threatned for the Murder of *Naboth*, and seizing his Vineyard, was respited and suspended, upon his Fasting and Humiliation, *1 Kings* 21. 29. The *Ninivites*, who for their Wickedness were devoted to Destruction, had yet for their repenting, fasting, and praying, the Sentence reversed; and God repented too of the Evil denounc'd against them, and did it not, as we read in the Book of *Jonas*: Of so great force is this Duty of Fasting with Almighty God, that it turns away his Wrath as soon as we turn unto him.

But

But the chiefest part of its Reward will be in the World to come, when our present Fastings will be chang'd into everlasting Feasting; and what is done here of that kind in the most secret Recesses, will be publickly own'd and rewarded before Angels and Men.

But because worldly Interest and Designs are too apt to mingle with, and corrupt this Duty of Fasting, therefore our Saviour seeks, in the next words, to withdraw Mens Affections from them, and keep them from placing any Trust or Confidence in them; saying, *Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth, where Moth and Rust do corrupt, and Thieves break through and steal:* that is, do not immoderately pursue these earthly things, nor make that your Treasure, which is subject to the Corruption of the Moth and Rust, and liable to the Rapine of Thieves and Robbers. But *lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust do corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through nor steal:* Raise your Affections to the Things above, which are perfectly free from all such Casualties; for the heavenly Treasure is not to be corrupted by the Moth, nor corroded by the Rust, nor invaded by Thieves, but is laid up in a safe Repository, out of the reach and power of all Accidents. This therefore he would have us seek, because the Treasure always draws the Heart after it; *For where our Treasure is, there will the Heart be also.* If we make any thing here below our Treasure, our Hearts will be glued and fasten'd to this World, and that will embase and corrupt our religious Services with low and secular Ends; but if we place our Treasure in Heaven, our Heart, our Delight, and our Conversation will be there too, and that will elevate us above all base and worldly Designs, and so render all our Services pure and acceptable unto God.

This is briefly the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which directs us in the two great Lessons of Fasting and Heavenly-mindedness, both which are to be learnt and practis'd by us; especially at this Season of *Lent*, when we are call'd to more than ordinary Acts of Self-Denial and Mortification. Let us then be mindful of this great and necessary Duty of Fasting, which if join'd with Prayer, will have a mighty Force and Efficacy with God: But then it must be duly qualify'd to attain this End; that is, it must be accompany'd with Repentance and Reformation. Indeed Fasting

carries in it something of that Revenge upon a Man's self for his former Excesses, which is an especial part of Repentance; as we read, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. For (as one hath well observ'd) by denying our Bodies the Refreshment of our ordinary Food, we inflict somewhat of Punishment upon our selves; which is a proper Effect of that Indignation which every Sinner ought to have against himself, and is indeed very acceptable unto God. But then we must take care to fast from Sin as well as from Food. If we hope to find Acceptance, we must so withdraw the Fuel from our Lusts, that they may not kindle or break out in any impure Flames: We must not rest in the outward Formalities of Fasting, such as a sad Countenance, or disfigur'd Face, to appear unto Men to fast, but look principally to the inward Sorrow and Sincerity of the Heart: to put on Sackcloth will avail nothing, except we be cloth'd with Humility; and to sprinkle Ashes on the Head will be of no use, without a broken and contrite Heart.

To conclude all; Let us, as occasion shall require, be truly observant of this Duty, keeping a private Fast for our own particular Sins, when we see it necessary for the subduing of them; and observing all publick Fasts enjoin'd for the bewailing of National Sins, and averting National Judgments and Calamities; and both with that Humility, Strictness, and Sincerity, that becometh Christians professing Godliness. Thus the keeping under of our Bodies will prove the Health and Welfare of our Souls, and our present short and momentary Fasts will be turn'd into Feasts of endless Joy and Felicity. Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE XLIII.

The EPISTLE for the First Sunday in *Lent*,

2 Cor. vi. I—II.

We then, as Workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain: For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation have I succour'd thee. Behold now is the accepted time, &c.

THIS Season of *Lent* hath been from the Days of the Apostles down to this last Age, religiously observ'd by all good Christians, in memory of Christ's fasting forty Days and forty Nights, before his Combat with the Devil; and likewise as a good Preparative for the great Festival of *Easter*: tho 'tis now fallen, in our days, into too great Disuse and Contempt, to the great Decay of Vertue and Religion. However, our Church in its Service still takes notice of it as a time of Abstinence and Mortification: and as the *Israelites* were commanded to afflict themselves, and to eat bitter Herbs before they were to eat the Paschal Lamb; so the Church requires to keep under the Body by low and spare Diet, the better to prepare for the Feast of *Easter*, when we are to feed upon that Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World: and therefore

The Collect for this Day teaches us to pray to our Lord, who for our sake did fast forty Days and forty Nights, to give us Grace to use such Abstinence, that our Flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey his godly Motions in Righteousness and true Holiness. To dispose us hereunto,

The Epistle for the Day directs us to walk suitably to our Christian Profession, and to keep to the strict Rules requir'd

requir'd thereby. The Substance of which Epistle may be reduc'd to two Heads.

First, The great Privileges we enjoy by the Light of the Gospel. And,

Secondly, The Returns of Duty and Gratitude we are to make for them; which are likewise double, *viz.* The doing all things commanded us in the Gospel: And the suffering all things that may be occasion'd by it.

I shall speak to both in the Order in which they are in the Epistle.

It begins with these words; *We then as Workers together with him, beseech you, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.*

The Apostle had, in the latter end of the foregoing Chapter, told us of the great Grace and Goodness of God to Mankind, in reconciling them to himself by Jesus Christ, Chap. 7. 18, 19, 20. And his committing to them the Ministry of this Reconciliation, to preach and publish it to the World. So that *we are now Ambassadors for Christ* (saith he) *as tho God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.* From whence he infers these words, *We then as Workers together with Christ*; that is, as Proxies or Partners join'd with him in the Work of Man's Salvation: he indeed as the Master-workman, that contriv'd and compass'd it; and we, as Under-workers, appointed by him to publish and propagate it: and both join together to *beseech you*, not to frustrate the Divine Goodness, *nor receive the Grace of God in vain.* Where, by the *Grace of God*, we are to understand the Gospel of Grace, or the Glad-Tidings of Salvation; for so the Grace of God is sometimes set to signify, as Titus 2. 12. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*, that is, the Gospel of Grace that brings the News of the Favour of God in Man's Salvation, *bath appeared unto all Men.* Which Grace of God, we that work with Christ, and supply his place in treating with Men about it, intreat you not to refuse, and so to receive the Gospel to no purpose, or to cast the Word of his Grace and Reconciliation from you. For so the receiving the Gospel in vain here signifies: And they who refuse the Tenders of Grace and Mercy offer'd in it, and reject the Terms of Peace and Reconciliation with God made by it, are the Persons that are said to do so. This is what the
Apostle

Apostle here so earnestly begs and beseeches Christians to beware of: which he rather does, because the Season of the Gospel is the accepted Time, or Day of Salvation chosen by God, wherein these Tenders of Mercy and Reconciliation are made: For he saith in the next words,

I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation have I succoured thee: meaning, that there is an acceptable Time, wherein we may be heard, and that there is a Day of Salvation, wherein we may be succoured; which if neglected, we may lose the Opportunity of both. And then adds, *Behold, now is the accepted Time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation.* The words are quoted out of the 49th Chapter of *Isaias*, and the 8th Verse; *Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a Day of Salvation have I help'd thee, and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the People, &c.* Which Words are a Prophecy concerning the Messiah in the times of the Gospel, wherein God the Father promises to bestow that Salvation, which shall be then purchas'd and procur'd by his Son. And the Apostle here tells us, that this is the Season pitch'd upon for the fulfilling of these Prophecies and Promises to the Sons of Men; that now the Gospel hath reveal'd these things to them, and the Ministers of the Gospel are sent to preach and press these gracious Offers upon them; and therefore earnestly entreats all Christians, not to slip this time, or to neglect so great Salvation, but rather to accept of the Tenders, and close with the Terms of it, that they may not receive the Grace of God in vain. These are some of the great Mercies and Privileges, we now enjoy by the Light of the Gospel; by which we may, if we please, know the things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes. To prevent which, I shall proceed to the

Next Thing to be spoken to, and that is the Return we are to make for these inestimable Favours. And this will concern both the Ministers that are to preach the Gospel, and the People that are to hear it; both which, in return for this Mercy, are to do what the Gospel requires, and to suffer what they may meet with in so doing. As for the Ministers of the Gospel, the Apostle exhorts them to an innocent and inoffensive Conversation, ver. 3. *Giving no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blam'd:* that is, giving no just Offence by the Looseness or Laziness of their Lives,
nor

nor laying any Scandal or Stumbling-blocks in the way, at which others may trip, or fall into Infidelity. They who are Teachers of others, should be Examples of their own Doctrine, and labour to press it upon the People by their own Practice, lest they hinder them from embracing the Gospel, which they seem not to believe themselves: for few will be gain'd to that, which they see those that persuade them to it, do shrink and vary from; nor will the People walk in those ways, which they see their Leaders to decline. And therefore the Apostle wills us carefully to abstain from all things that may avert any from the Faith, or bring any Blame on the Ministry; and strictly keep to those things, that may gain Profelytes, and adorn our Profession. *In all things* (as he goes on) *approving ourselves as the Ministers of God*, and shewing all Fidelity in the discharge of our Office.

Neither doth he rest in these general Exhortations, but in the following Verses he descends to Particulars, and shews us wherein we are thus to demean our selves both to God and Man.

As, 1st, *In Patience*, or a firm Steadiness of Mind under all sorts of Evils; as *in Afflictions*, *in Necessities*, *in Distresses*; which may befall us at the hands of God: *In Stripes*, *in Imprisonments*, *in Tumults*; which may befall us from the hands of Men: *In Labours*, *in Watchings*, *in Fastings*; which we may impose upon our selves for our Soul's Good. All which are the Trials of our Patience, which must be borne and gone through with Courage and Constancy; that *Patience may have her perfect Work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*; James i. 4.

And having thus directed us in the Objects and Exercises of our Patience, all which he himself had manfully undergone, as he tells us in 2 Cor. ii. latter end; he proceeds in the next Verse to prescribe the proper Ways and Means, by which we may be enabled to do the same. As, first, *by Pureness*, in opposition to all the Impurities of carnal and sensual Lusts. Purity of Body and Mind adds Strength and Vigour to both, fortifies them against Temptations, and enervates all the Wiles of the Devil; it prevents Evils, or enables to bear them: In a word, Purity recommends our Persons, and adorns our Profession; and is either a good Preservative from Trouble, or a Safeguard under it. Whereas the Impurities of fleshly Lusts defile the Soul, emasculate the Body, and enfeeble all the Powers
and

and Faculties of each. *How weak is thine Heart* (saith God) *seeing thou hast done these things?* Ezek. 16. 30. 'Tis spoken in the Case of Harlotry and Fornication, and other fleshly and filthy Lusts, which pollute and weaken both Soul and Body, and render them unable to withstand any Temptation; these things stain both our Person and Profession, and bring on those Evils, which we can neither bear nor avoid. And therefore we should, as at all times, so especially at this Season of Mortification, *abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul*; and labour to preserve an unspotted Chastity and Purity of Mind: for *the Wisdom that is from above* (as St. James tells us) *is first pure,* and free from all Pollution, which is the Pureness here recommended.

2dly, The Apostle, for the discharge of our Duty recommends *Knowledg*, in opposition to wilful Blindness and Ignorance. By Pureness, *by Knowledg*, that is, of God and our selves; which will shew us the Light of Divine Truths, and lead us to our Duty. A true Knowledg of God will make us willing to do what he enjoins, and to bear what he inflicts; for he doth both entirely for our Good, and consults in them nothing but our Interest and Happiness; he never willingly grieves or afflicts any, nor lays any more upon us, than he enables to bear; he uses the Rod only to enforce his Word, to make us learn, and fit us to be remov'd to a higher Form: He that knows and considers this, will receive his Counsels, and reform by his Corrections.

And as the Knowledg of God, so the Knowledg of our selves is very useful and necessary to these ends. He that knows his own Impotence, and his total Dependence upon God for all things, will be the more easily persuaded to hearken to him; and he that rightly considers how much harder things he deserves, than those he feels, may learn thankfully to embrace his Favours, and patiently to endure his Frowns. To which end,

3dly, The Apostle farther recommends *Long-suffering*, in opposition to Passion and Peevishness. So the next Word is, *by Long-suffering*. This is a Vertue that keeps the Mind calm and easy under all that can happen: St. Paul makes it a Branch or Property of Charity, 1 Cor. 13. 4. *Charity suffereth long*; and elsewhere makes it an Ornament of the Mind, and the main Grace of our Christian Profession, Eph. 4. 1, 2. where exhorting Christians to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are call'd*, adds, *with Long-suffering*,

suffering, forbearing one another in Love, as the best Way and Means to that end. This Vertue takes off the Hastiness of Mens Spirits, and checks all Thoughts of revenging and returning Evils; it teaches Forbearance in case of Wrongs, and to overcome Evil with Good, which is a Vertue to be learnt and practis'd at all times, but more especially at this time of greater Devotion and Charity. Again,

4thly, Another Way and Means here recommended, is, *by Kindness*; which, to the bearing of Evil, adds the doing of Good, and that to the Bodies and Souls, to the Estates and good Name of one another: in all which, Christianity obliges to all good Offices, and to be as helpful to each other in these Matters as we can. Hereby we shall imitate the Bounty of Heaven, which is still showring down Blessings, and also the Love of our Saviour, who *went about still doing good*.

Moreover, the Apostle wills us to approve our selves as the Ministers of God, *by the Holy Ghost*; that is, by the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, given to that end. In the early days of Christianity, there were the extraordinary Gifts of Miracles, Tongues and Propheying, which were all commanded to be us'd for the Good of the Church, and the Edification of the Members of it. But those being long since ceas'd, we are now to approve our selves by the diligent Exercise of those ordinary Gifts, that are still continu'd and bestow'd for that purpose, and that is to be done too *by Love unfeign'd*; that is, with a sincere Charity and Zeal for the Good of Mens Souls.

Furthermore, we are to approve our selves unto God, *by the Word of Truth*; that is, by preaching the Gospel of Christ, the Word of Truth and eternal Life; which will be made effectual *by the Power of God*, and the Operations of his Holy Spirit: being guarded *by the Armour of Righteousness on the right hand and on the left*; by which we may be able to repel all Temptations on every side.

In this Course he would have the Ministers of Christ to persevere both *by Honour and Dishonour*, not being lifted up by the one, or cast down by the other: *By evil Report and good Report*, carrying the same Calmness and Equanimity of Mind under both. From hence he takes occasion to instance in some of those evil Reports and mean Sentiments, that the World may have of them; which yet are very contrary to the Truth and Reality of things, and far different from what Christ hath told them, and their own Experience may inform them.

As

As Deceivers, and yet true; that is, the wicked World may reckon you as Impostors, that follow cunningly-devised Fables, and seek to impose upon the Faith and Credulity of the People: but Christ will own you as his true and faithful Servants, and will reward you accordingly.

As unknown, and yet well known; tho you may be despis'd and look'd upon by some as Persons whom they know not, yet shall you by undoubted Proofs be known to them who you are, even the Ministers of God. The *Jews* would not know Christ himself, and some said of the Apostles, *Away with these Fellows, we know not whence they are*: but these were after well known by their Doctrine and Miracles, and so will all they that publish and adhere to them.

As dying (as he goes on) and behold we live; tho we have been often in danger of Death, and judg'd as lost Men; tho some have wish'd and threatned Death to us, yet by God's Help we are still alive, and under the Safeguard of his Almighty Arm.

As chastened, and not killed. We may be permitted indeed to be afflicted and chasten'd for our good, and may be sometimes quicken'd in our Duty by the Rod; but God will not suffer their Malice to go so far as to put us to death, but will save and defend us from all such Cruelty. It follows in the next words,

As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing: to outward appearance we may be thought full of Trouble and Melancholy, and our Lives look'd upon to be made up of nothing but Sorrow and Sadness; when yet we are all the while inwardly easy and chearful, and can always rejoice in the Testimony of a good Conscience.

Lastly, *As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*. Tho we are poor and low in Substance, yet do we enrich others with far more valuable Riches; and tho we seem to want and to have nothing, yet having a contented Mind, we possess a Treasure, that abundantly supplies us with all things: wherein we imitate our blessed Saviour, who for our sakes became poor, that we thro his Poverty may be made rich; and what is wanting in temporal good things, is supply'd in spiritual and heavenly Enjoyments.

Thus I have gone thro the several Parts and Passages of this Day's Epistle; from whence we may draw the following Inferences:

1st, We

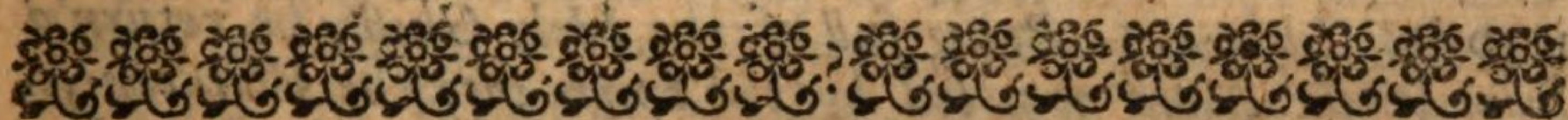
1st, We learn hence the honourable Work and Business of the Ministry, which is a Fellow-working with God in the matter of Man's Salvation; so the Apostle here speaks, *We then as Workers together with God, &c.* And what better Work and Employment can we be set about, than to be not only Partners with the Angels, who are sent forth as ministring Spirits to the Heirs of Salvation, but to be Fellow-workers with God and Christ in reconciling the World to himself? Christ's Part herein was the purchasing our Peace by the Blood of his Cross, and our Part is the publishing this Peace by the Word of his Grace; in which, as we ought to be faithful and diligent, so are the People to receive and respect us accordingly.

2^{ly}, We are taught, by the Epistle for this Day, not to receive the Gospel, which is the Grace of God, in vain, but to answer the End, that we may obtain the Reward of it. Hence we are bid to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, that we may not bring Dishonour upon our Holy Profession; and elsewhere, to walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ: otherwise we shall only bear the Name of Christ, to expose and disparage it, which will be not only to receive the Grace of God *in vain*, but to very bad purpose; for if we thus abuse and turn the Grace of God into Wantonness, we shall turn his Favour into Fury; and the Gospel of Grace, instead of advancing our Happiness, will but aggravate our Condemnation. The greater Light of it will sink us into the deeper Abyss of Darkness, and all the Woes and Threatnings contain'd in it will light upon our own Heads; *it is or better had it been never to have known the ways of Righteousness, than having known them, to turn away from the Holy Commandment:* 2 Pet. 2. 21.

3^{ly}, From what hath been said, we learn, that as God hath his accepted Times and Seasons, when he will be heard and ready to succour us; so it will be our Duty and Wisdom to embrace and lay hold of them. The Wise-man tells us of some, who have Prizes put into their Hands, and yet have no Hearts to make use of them; whom he therefore stiles Fools, that afterward, when it is too late, repent of their Folly. Our Saviour wept over *Jerusalem*, and bewail'd their Folly, for letting slip the time of Mercy, and thereby bringing upon themselves inevitable Destruction; saying, *Oh that thou hadst known, in this thy Day, the things that belong unto thy Peace! but now they are hid*

hid from thine Eyes. Our Apostle here tells us, *that the Days of the Gospel are the accepted time, and that now is the Day of Salvation*; which we are therefore to close with and improve to the best advantage: for if we neglect or let it slip, we shall have cause to lament, but must never hope to repair our Folly.

Lastly, We may learn from hence Patience and Perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding all the Difficulties and Discouragements we may meet with in it. We see the Apostles went thro many Afflictions and Tribulations, without Weariness or Fainting under them; they still kept on in the way of their Duty, and carry'd an indifferent and equal Mind in all the good or bad Fortune that beset them: They went thro Honour and Dishonour, thro good Report and bad Report, without being elevated by the one, or depress'd by the other. Let us imitate their noble Example, by holding out to the end, and then by following them in the ways of Grace here, we shall e'er long follow them to Glory: which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.



DISCOURSE XLIV.

The GOSPEL for the First Sunday in *Lent*.

St. Matthew iv. I—II.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. And when he had fasted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterwards an hungred, &c.

IN the Gospel for this Day we have an Account of that memorable Passage of Christ's Temptation, and therein of the most glorious Combat that was ever fought on Earth, *viz.* between Christ and the Devil, the Prince of Peace against the Prince of Darkness; together with the compleatest Victory and Conquest that was ever won, the Devil being absolutely foil'd and routed in all his Attempts.

Of which great Action, we have here the Time, Place, Manner, and other Circumstances fully related to us: which Relation begins Verse 1. *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.* Where the Time of entering upon this Combat, is imply'd in the word *then*: And when was that? Why, that the Close of the foregoing Chapter will shew us; where we read of his being baptiz'd by John in Jordan: *And straitway when he went up out of the Water, the Heavens were open'd unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon him; and lo! a Voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Immediately after this, and before he enter'd upon his Office of Preaching, *then* it was, that *he was led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness.* The same Spirit of God, that just before lighted upon him, and gave this Testimony of him, here led him into the Wilderness: St. Mark expresses it by driving him into the Wilderness, *Mark* 1. 12. to shew that he did not voluntarily run or put himself into Temptation, but was by a vehement Impulse or Incitation of the Holy Ghost (of which St. Luke tells us he was full) led or drawn into it; *Luke* 4. 1. *Being full of the Holy Ghost, he return'd from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness.* That was the place where he was to be tempted of the Devil; Solitariness and unfrequented Recesses being most liable to the Hauntings and Sollicitations of evil Spirits. Now to prepare himself for this Encounter, as also for his Entrance on the Work of the Ministry after, he set apart some time for Abstinence and Prayer; not that he needed such things to those ends, his Divinity being able to assist his Human Nature without those Helps, but to leave us an Example in all great Enterprizes to do the same. He fasted forty Days and forty Nights, in imitation of *Moses* and *Elias*, who both fasted so long, the one at the giving of the Law, and the other at the restoring of it; as we read, *Exod.* 24. 18. & *1 Kings* 19. 8. whose Examples mov'd Christ to do the same at the beginning of the Gospel. And the primitive Church, in imitation of our Blessed Saviour, appointed likewise a Fast of forty Days as a Preparative for *Easter*; not indeed a total Abstinence from all Meat, as our Saviour's was, for our weak Natures cannot bear that; but a low and spare Diet, and to use such Abstinence, that the Flesh being subdu'd to the Spirit, we may the better obey the godly Motions of the Holy Spirit. This holy Fast was continu'd without

without interruption from the Apostles days down to this last Age, at which time our unhappy Civil Wars put a stop to this pious and antient Practice.

But to return to our Saviour; *When he had fasted forty Days and forty Nights, he was afterward an hungred.* When he had spent that long time in Contemplation and Prayer, without eating or drinking any thing, Nature began to return to its ordinary Course and Craving, insomuch that he was vehemently press'd with Hunger; shewing that he felt the same Appetites of Hunger and Thirst, and was liable to the same Infirmities of human Nature with our selves. The Devil finding him thus pinch'd with Want and Hunger, as other Men in such cases are wont to be, thought hereby to gain some advantage upon him; and therefore here made his first Onset, attacking him on this weak side, to prevail on his Infirmary: for *the Tempter came presently to him, and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these Stones be made Bread.* Where he makes use of his present Necessity, and withal urges the Dignity of his Person, as being the Son of God, to draw him into some diffidence or distrust of his Father; and would not have him wait for his Father's Provision, which might be long a coming, but make use of his Divine Power to supply himself in an extraordinary way in this Exigence. He suggested to him, that his Condition requir'd present Relief, and 'twas in vain to stay for the coming down of Bread from Heaven, or the springing up of Bread from the Earth; but he should work a Miracle to help himself in such a Necessity, and turn the Stones before him into Bread. Now the Devil had a double Design in this Temptation; the one to draw from Christ some proof or trial of his Divinity, to be made use of or eluded as he saw cause; the other, to draw him into Sin, as either Impatience, or Despair of his Father's Care of him, or Pride, and Presumption in himself, or Rebellion against God; either of which would defeat the End of his Coming. This is the Temptation, or first Attack made upon him.

But how did our Saviour elude or escape it? Why, by quoting of God's Word against him; for *he answer'd and said, It is written, Man shall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.* These words are written in *Deut. 8. 3.* where the Israelites being hungry and thirsty in the Wilderness, demanded of

Moses a Miracle for their Sustainance : to whom he reply'd in these words, *Man doth not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God* : intimating thereby, that in cases of Want we are to depend upon the Providence of God, who is all-sufficient, and able with a Word to supply our Necessities, as he did the *Israelites* with Manna in the Desert. Moreover, he might intimate to Satan what he after told his Disciples, that *he had Meat to eat which they knew not of*, John 4. 32, 34. and that *his Meat and Drink was to do the Will of him who sent him*. Neither needed he a Miracle to satisfy his Hunger, when he could do it by other ordinary means ; for he had *John's Food* in the Wilderness where he was, and by speedily quitting it, he could have it elsewhere. Thus he foil'd him in his first Temptation, not by gratifying his Curiosity with a needless Miracle, but by teaching an excellent Lesson of Submission, Obedience, and Resignation to his Father's Will in the greatest Extremities.

The Devil being thus worsted in his first Attempt, resolves to try a second ; and since he could not draw our Saviour into a Despair or Distrust of his Father's Care, he seeks to drive him into Presumption, or a casting himself upon it without warrant : so natural is it for the Devil and Men too to run from one Extreme to the other, like the possess'd Man in the Gospel, who fell sometimes *into the Fire*, and sometimes *into the Water*, Mat. 17. 15. So do Men fall sometimes into the Fire of ill-temper'd Zeal, sometimes into the Waters of Coolness and Indifference. Now this second Assault of Satan's is in the next Verses : *Then the Devil taketh him up into the Holy City, and setteth him on a Pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down ; for it is written, He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a Stone*. Where the Devil is said to take him up, and by St. Mark to bring him ; neither of which imply any Violence, or dragging him by force, but his going by consent, or a complying with and attending his Motion.

Some indeed tell us, that God gave Satan for the time some power over Christ's Body, as he did once over *Job's*, that the Devil might do his worst, and so make our Saviour's Victory over him the greater. Most probable it is, that Satan carry'd him through the Air without any hurt,
by

by the permission of God and Christ himself; for he might say to the Devil, as he did once to *Pilate*, *Thou couldst have no power over me, except it were given thee from above*; John 19. 11. But whither did the Devil carry him? Why, he took him up, and brought him *into the Holy City*; that is, to *Jerusalem*, call'd the Holy City because it was the Seat of the Temple and Altar, and the Place of God's more immediate Presence and Worship. Thither, from the Privacy and Retirements of the Wilderness, he was carry'd into a place of greater State and more publick Resort. When he came there, *the Devil set him upon a Pinnacle of the Temple*; that is, upon the Battlements of the Temple, for a Pinnacle properly taken is of that Narrowness and Sharpness at top, that a Bird can hardly pitch upon it, and much less can a human Body be plac'd there. 'Tis generally interpreted of the flat Roof of the Tower over the *Porticus* or Porch of the Temple, which was rais'd higher than the rest of the Fabrick, and faced the Courts. Here he minds him again of his being stil'd the Son of God, and would have him to shew himself to be so, by casting himself down from thence; which he might securely do by the strength of his Divine Power, and the Guardianship of the Angels that continually attended his Safety. And here the Tempter quoteth Scripture, and comes with his *It is written, He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone*. The words are written in the 91st Psalm, ver. 11, 12. but are here wrested, misalledg'd, and misapply'd by Satan, for he cites this Scripture by halves: *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways*: Here he omits this latter Clause, which promises Protection only whilst we keep to the ways of our Duty and Calling; but if we go out of those ways, we go out of God's Protection, which is promis'd on no other terms, but whilst we confine our selves to the Business of our Vocation. The Providence of God, and the Care of the holy Angels, will preserve us in all unavoidable Dangers that may happen in the ways of our Calling, but not in those voluntary Difficulties we draw upon our selves by leaving it.

But how did our Saviour answer, and avoid this Temptation? Why, by the same Weapon of God's Word: for *Jesus said unto him, it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. Which words are written, *Deut. 6. 16*. where the *Israelites* are forbidden to tempt God, as they

often did, by asking things unseasonably, or unnecessarily; and to fall a murmuring, if they had it not in the time or manner that they expected: for which reason we are caution'd not to tempt God, as some of them often tempted him, 1 *Cor.* 10. 9. Now tempting of God is either by putting too little Confidence in him; thus the *Israelites* doubting of God's Care, Power, and Goodness in providing for them, after so many Arguments and Assurances thereof, is in Scripture frequently stiled their tempting of God: or else the putting too much, or too vain and groundless Confidence in him; thus to run one's self into danger, and then expect to be sav'd by a Miracle out of it, is a tempting of God, and so it is to look for that in an extraordinary way, which may be done by ordinary means. This was here the Case of our Saviour; the Devil would have him throw himself down from the Pinnacle of the Temple, in hopes of being preserv'd by a Divine Power, or the Care of Angels, when perhaps he might go down by the stairs, or other ordinary ways of going up: or if the Devil would have him do this, to shew whether he were the Son of God, or to see whether God would own and preserve him as such, he tells him there was no need of such Evidences for that, which was already declar'd by a Voice from Heaven; *Mat.* 3. 17. So that what he desir'd, would be a tempting of God, so manifestly forbidden, that the Devil could make no farther Reply to it. Thus was he foil'd a second time, and his Temptation to Presumption prevail'd no more than that to Despair. However, the Devil would not give off so, and tho he were routed twice, yet would he rally again once more, and come on with a

Third Temptation, and see whether he could draw him into Idolatry. This follows in the next words; *Again the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high Mountain, and sheweth him all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Here the Devil treats our Saviour not as the Son of God, but as the Carpenter's Son; magnifying himself above him, and promising to prefer and do great things for him, if he would do as he would have him. To that end, he takes him from the Pinnacle of the Temple, from whence he had the prospect of *Jerusalem* only, and transports him to a place of greater height, even to the top of an exceeding high Mountain,

tain, where he had a much greater and larger prospect. There, besides all that was within the ken and reach of his Eye to behold from that great height, he represents unto him, as in a Scheme or Map, the great and spacious Kingdoms of the Earth, with all the Glory and Beauty of them; all which he set forth and shew'd him at once (in a moment, saith St. *Luke*) as all at his command, and lying at his feet, telling him, that all these things were his, and that to whomsoever he pleas'd he could give them; and that if our Saviour would but bow the Knee, and give him the Honour due to such a Benefactor, that is, if he would fall down and worship him, they should all become his, and he should be presently put into possession of them. Here 'tis probable that the Devil, in this last Temptation, enlarg'd himself with many glozing Words and Arts of Insinuation, telling him, what great things he had done for others, and how much greater things he design'd for him; hoping that the View and Promise of such worldly Pomp might work upon one that came out of a Wilderness, and never saw such things before. But this Proposal of his was full of Pride and Falshood: The Devil was a Lyar from the beginning, and deceiv'd our first Parents with his Lyes and Impostures; and he hoped to do the same with our Blessed Saviour, who could easily see through and detect all his Fallacies.

The truth is, the Devil is so far from being able to give the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them, that (as one hath observ'd) he cannot give a poor Witch a Farthing, for all her falling down, worshipping, and giving her Soul to him. Yea, he hath not the disposal of himself, being a miserable Captive, ty'd up in Chains of Darkness, and can go no further than God permits him.

However, our Saviour, in repelling this Temptation, takes little or no notice of his Lyes and deluding Appearances; but finding him invading the Prerogative of his Father, and claiming that Divine Worship that belongs only to him, he first replies with great Indignation, saying, *Get thee hence Satan*; or, as St. *Luke* hath it, *Get thee behind me Satan*: both which shew our Lord's Abhorrence of his impudent and blasphemous Proposal, bidding him be gone, as a wicked Fiend, and to get out of his sight as an odious and detestable Object. After which, with his former Mildness he answers him a third time out of the Scripture, saying, *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him*

him only shalt thou serve. The words are quoted out of the same Book of *Deuteronomy*, Chap. 6. ver. 13, 14. where tho the Words vary, the Sense is the same; *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt not go after other Gods*: which is, to serve and worship him only, and not by any specious Offers of worldly Wealth or Honour to be drawn from him.

Thus did our Saviour repel his third Temptation, by opening his false Pack, and shewing his deceitful Wares; which being the last Bait he had to offer, when that would not take, he went his way with shame, and rally'd no more. So the next words declare, *Then the Devil leaveth him, and behold! Angels came and ministred unto him.* Christ had a little before said, *Get thee hence Satan*; the Force of which words finding himself unable to resist, he made haste to sneak and flink away, quitting the field, and leaving Christ a compleat Conqueror: by which the Devil saw, what he before question'd, that Christ was the Son of God. And when this evil Spirit departed, 'tis said the Angels came and ministred unto him. We read, when the good Spirit went from *Saul*, an evil Spirit came and troubled him; they could not, it seems, abide together: *1 Sam.* 16. 14. Here, on the contrary, when the evil Spirit departed from Christ, the good Spirits the Angels came and comforted him: they congratulated his Victory, and join'd with him in his Triumph over Principalities and Powers, over the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, and making all spiritual Wickednesses to quit their high Places.

This is briefly the Gospel for this Day, containing our Saviour's Combat with the Devil, together with his absolute Conquest and Triumph over him. From whence we may learn some useful Lessons: As,

1. From Christ's being tempted of the Devil, we may learn, that the best of Men are in this World liable to Temptation. If Christ were led into it, his Disciples may not hope to escape it; the Disciple is not above his Lord; The Devil's Spite is as great to us as it was to him, and the more, for being his Followers; which should make us all to look and prepare for Temptation, that we may be arm'd against it come.

From the Time of Christ's Temptation, which was immediately after he was by a Voice from Heaven proclaim'd to be the Son of God, we may learn, after any more than ordinary

ordinary Favour or Honour confer'd upon us, to expect and provide for a Temptation: it was so with Christ here, and with *St. Paul* after, and so it hath been with many eminent Saints since.

Again, Christ's Temptation being just before his Entrance upon the Ministry, may teach the Ministers of Christ at all times, but then especially, to look for Trials, and to arm themselves with Patience, Courage, and Constancy under them.

From the Place of Christ's Temptation, which was a Wilderness, we may learn that Solitariness and great Retirement gives advantage to the Tempter, and exposes us to his Temptations; which should teach Men, especially such as are inclin'd to Melancholy, to avoid solitary Places and too much Retirement, to drive Satan from them, and to associate themselves with wise and vertuous Persons; which will be a good means both to prevent, and to prevail over his Temptations.

Again, From Christ's being led, not voluntarily going into the Wilderness, we may learn not wilfully to run into Temptation, but stay till we are led into it by the Course of Divine Providence; and then we may comfortably expect a happy End and Issue out of it.

Once more, From Christ's being tempted, we may take comfort in his Sympathy with us, and the Succour he will thereby give in our Temptations: *For we have not such a High-Priest* (saith the Apostle) *who cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without Sin*; Heb. 4. 15. And in that he himself hath suffer'd, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted; Heb. 2. 18. which may teach us to rely on so tender and merciful a Saviour.

2. From Christ's fasting forty Days and forty Nights before his Temptation, we may learn to use Abstinence and Devotion, to prepare us for what may befall us. Our Saviour tells us, that there is one kind of evil Spirits, *that go not out but by Prayer and Fasting*, Mat. 17. 21. And of this sort was that which he encounter'd, which made him fast and pray to be deliver'd from him, to give us an Example to do likewise. *Watch and pray* (saith he) *that ye enter not into Temptation*; or if you are led into it, that you be deliver'd out of it.

3. From Christ's first Temptation to despair of God's Goodness, and to take care of himself by other means; we may

may learn not to distrust the Providence of God, by having recourse to any indirect ways, but to cast our care upon him that careth for us; trusting to his Promises, and saying with our Saviour, that *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.*

4. From Christ's second Temptation to cast himself upon unnecessary Dangers, upon a Presumption of an extraordinary Deliverance; we may learn always to keep in God's way, and never presume upon any Blessing or Assistance out of it. Now God's way is the way of our Calling and of our Duty; in which if we keep, we shall do well, for he hath promis'd to save and defend us in it, but never out of it: and therefore let us never leave the one, out of any vain Hopes and Dependence upon the other.

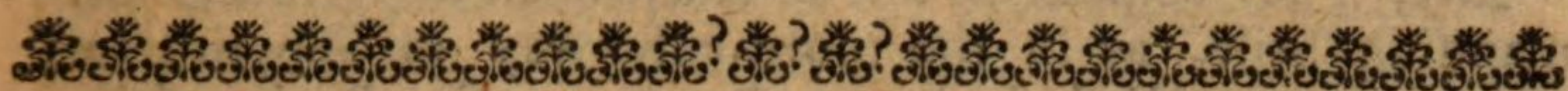
5. From Christ's refusing the Devil's specious Offer in the third Temptation, of the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory thereof, upon the Terms of serving him; let us learn never to fly to the Devil, or any of his unlawful Ways, to enrich or advance our selves. Now those Ways are all the crafty Methods of Fraud, Injustice, and Oppression, which ever bring a Curse instead of a Blessing.

6. From the Devil's plying our Saviour with one Temptation after another, we learn, that he is a restless and importunate Enemy; tho he be foil'd at first, yet will he rally again, and renew his Temptations, still going up and down seeking whom he may devour: which should set us always upon our guard against him.

7. From Christ's still urging Scripture against him, saying, *It is written*; we learn, that God's Word is the best Weapon against all the Assaults of the Devil, and the best Shield to defend us against all his fiery Darts.

8. From the Devil's leaving our Saviour after his manful Opposition against him, we may learn to resist the Devil, and he will flee from us; tho he may not do it presently, but follow us a while, as he did our Saviour, yet he must and will fly at last.

Lastly, From the Angels coming after his departure, and ministring to our Saviour, we may learn at all times to keep close unto God, and he will give his Angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways: so shall we be safe in our Persons, and successful in all our Enterprizes; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XLV.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday in *Lent*.

I Theff. iv. 1—9.

We beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have receiv'd of us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what Commandments we gave you, by the Lord Jesus, &c.

THE Collect for this Day prays to God, who seeth that we have no power of our selves to help our selves, to keep us both outwardly in our Bodies, and inwardly in our Souls, that we may be defended from all Adversities which may happen to the one, and from all evil Thoughts that may assault and hurt the other. In order whereunto,

The Epistle for the Day gives us Rules and Directions for the Welfare of both. It begins with a [general Exhortation to walk so as to please God, and to abound therein more and more. Where I shall observe both the Manner and the Matter of the Exhortation.

As for the Manner of the Exhortation, it is with all possible Mildness and Gentleness, in these words; *We beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by our Lord Jesus.* Where we have,

1st, The kind and endearing Compellation of *Brethren*. He treats us not as Strangers or Enemies, nor yet with the common and ordinary Stile of Friends, but with the loving and obliging Appellation of Brethren, which is one of the nearest and dearest of all Relations. Hence St. Peter recommending mutual Affection among Christians, bids them to *love as Brethren*, 1 Pet. 3. 8. With this loving Title the Apostles frequently address to us, the better to instil and inforce their Exhortations upon us. Again,

2^{dly},

2dly, They bespeak us not so much in an imperious, commanding Stile, as in the more easy way of Supplication and Intreaty; *We beseech you, Brethren.* St. Paul writing to Philemon, tells him, that *tho he might be bold to enjoin him what was convenient*, yet for Love's sake, he rather beseeched him, *Philem. ver. 8, 9.* He had Power enough, as an Apostle, to enforce his Exhortation, and might have requir'd Obedience from him by the Authority of his Office; yet he seems to wave that, and only to draw him by the Cords of Love. Accordingly we find him courting and beseeching of Christians, in all Places where he came: *We beseech you* (saith he to the *Corinthians*) *in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God.* And to the *Romans*, *We beseech you* (saith he) *by the Mercies of God.* By these mild and gentle Methods, he endeavour'd to instil and insinuate his Instructions, which many times prevail and work more than the rougher ways of Satire and Inveective; as gentle Showers pierce sooner and sink deeper than greater Storms. But this is not all, for here are added,

3dly, The two great Titles of our Lord Jesus; the one commanding, the other obliging us to obey him; *We beseech you by the Lord Jesus*: both which contain Motives strong enough to engage us to the hardest Duties. *The Love of Christ constraineth us* (saith the Apostle;) and he who hath loved us to the very Death, may even force us to love him again, who hath purchased for us Eternal Life. And therefore we find the Apostles backing their Exhortations, sometimes with *the Name of Christ*, sometimes with *the Mercies of Christ*, sometimes with *the Bowels of Christ*: and here they urge upon us even the Person of Christ; *We beseech you by the Lord Jesus*, that is, by him who is not only our Lord and Master, and so may challenge our Obedience, but our Jesus or Saviour, and so hath infinitely deserved it.

This is the Manner of the Apostle's dealing with these *Thessalonians*, and this is the way of treating with all Christians; not handling them with Sharpness and bitter Reflections, which are more apt to provoke, than to persuade; but wooing them with Entreaties, and endeavouring to win them by all the Endearments of Kindness and Christianity. This for the Manner of the Exhortation.

The Matter of it is in the next words; *That as ye have receiv'd of us, how ye ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more.* Where the Apostle intimates to us,

First,

First, That we have receiv'd sufficient Directions how we are to walk, and likewise how we may please God.

For the First, a Christian's Life is here, and often elsewhere in Scripture, set forth by Walking; which takes in all his Ways, and comprizes the whole Course of his Conversation; all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, come under this Notion, and fall under these Directions. Now the Apostle here tells us, that we have receiv'd Instructions how we are to walk, and to order all these; that is, how we are to order our Thoughts, to govern our Words, and to regulate our Actions: For all which we have the Rule of God's Word, which teaches us how to direct our Course, and to order our Conversation aright in all these Matters. There we are taught what to believe, as necessary to Salvation, which is summ'd up for us in the Apostles Creed; what to do, which is summ'd up in the Ten Commandments, which lay before us our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and our selves; and what we are to pray for, which is contain'd in the Lord's Prayer. By all which we have receiv'd, how we are to walk in the whole Course of our Lives.

And likewise how we are to please God, which follows from the former; for when our Ways are right, and directed by these Rules, they will be well-pleasing unto God, and surely find Acceptance with him. For so the Psalmist tells us, the *Lord ordereth a good Man's Ways, and maketh them acceptable to himself*; Psal. 37. 23. He will certainly accept what is done by his Order, and he cannot but delight in those ways, where the Steps are guided by his Direction.

This is what the Apostle thought fit to mind the *Thessalonians*, and all other Christians of; that he had hid nothing from them that was necessary for them to know, but had faithfully reveal'd to them the whole Mind and Will of God. So that it will be in vain to plead Ignorance of their Duty; for Light is come into the World, and to them it was given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. And therefore having receiv'd this Light, he would have them to work and to act by it, and to walk so as to please God, by keeping still in those Ways that were thus chalk'd out for them; which they could not easily miss, being made so plain before them: *For ye know* (saith he, in the next Verse) *what Commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus*; which relate only to your good, and serve to keep you in that way that leads to Eternal Life; in which therefore we beseech

befeech you to persist, and to *abound more and more*. But beside this general Exhortation, to walk in the ways of Christianity, the Apostle descends to two particular Graces or Vertues, *viz.* Purity of Life, and Honesty in Dealings; adding withal, a Caution against the opposite Vices, of Uncleanneſs and Dishonesty: Which things take up the remaining part of this Epistle, and must therefore be particularly handled.

And, 1st, for Purity of Life; that is urg'd upon us in the next words; *For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification, that you should abstain from Fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour.* That this is the Will of God, is very plain from his many Precepts and Exhortations to this purpose: *Ye are called unto Holiness* (saith the Apostle) *be not ye the Servants of Sin, or Slaves to your Lust: Without Holiness no Man can see the Lord:* No impure Person or Thing can enter his Presence, or appear in his Sight; 'tis the pure in Heart only that shall see God; and all that have such Hope, must purify themselves even as he is pure. *Whatsoever things are pure* (saith the Apostle) *if there be any Vertue, think on these things;* Phil. 4. 8. Be not Partakers or Partners with others in their Vices and Impurities, but *keep thy self pure,* 1 Tim. 5. 22. By these and many other places to the same purpose, 'tis evident, that Purity and Holiness is the Will and Command of God; 'tis call'd here, our Sanctification: *This is the Will of God, even your Sanctification;* for hereby we dedicate our selves unto God and his Service: and whatsoever is thus devoted to him, is said in Scripture to be sanctified and made holy unto the Lord. This is express'd in the next Verse, by *possessing our Vessel in Sanctification and Honour:* Where by Vessel, is meant the Vessel of the Body, in which the Soul lodges, and is the Instrument of its Operations in God's Service, as a Vessel of his Temple. By *possessing this Vessel in Sanctification,* is meant, the keeping it clean from all Pollution of filthy Lusts, according to that of *Isaias*, Chap. 52. 11. *Be ye clean all ye that bear the Vessels of the Lord.* To this St. Paul alludes, when he styles our Bodies *the Temples of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. 6. 19. and therefore wills us to set them apart from all sinful and unclean Uses, and to consecrate them as a holy and acceptable Sacrifice unto God; that by making them the Vessels of Grace now, they may be prepar'd and fitted to be made Vessels of Glory hereafter. This is to possess our Vessel in
Sancti-

Sanctification and Honour; which will bring Glory to God, and Honour both to our Person and Profession.

To this the Apostle adds a strict Caution against all Uncleanneſs, and the Impurities of ſenſual Luſts; *That ye abſtain from Fornication*, ver. 3. *That ye poſſeſs your Veſſels, not in the Luſt of Concupiſcence, even as the Gentiles, that know not God.* By which we are taught to avoid all the Defilements and Pollutions of the Fleſh, which are the Blemiſh, the Scandal, and the Diſgrace of our holy Profeſſion; and to make no Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof. Hence we find *St. Peter* earneſtly entreating all Chriſtians, in theſe words; *I beſeech you, Brethren, as Pilgrims and Strangers, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, which war againſt the Soul*; 1 Pet. 2. 11. And *St. Paul* here beſeeches us to flee all the Vices of the *Gentiles*, and more eſpecially this of Concupiſcence, the moſt noiſom and moſt dangerous of all fleſhly Luſts: and the rather, becauſe theſe were the vile Practices and Idolatries of the ignorant Heathens, who had no Knowledg of the true God, or the true Way of ſerving him: their Gods were as vile and vicious as themſelves, and they worſhipped them accordingly with obſcene and bloody Sacrifices. They had a drunken *Bacchus*, a wanton *Venus*, a thieviſh *Mercury*; and no wonder if the Votaries committed the ſame Vices with their Deities, and ran into thoſe Exceſſes of Luſt and Riot, of which their Gods were both the Patrons and Examples. But the Chriſtians have better learned God and Chriſt, they have attain'd to the Knowledg of the true God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold the leaſt Iniquity; and therefore it muſt be highly unbecoming them, to delight and wallow in ſuch Impurities. This is one Vertue to which we are here exhorted; namely, Purity of Life and Converſation, in oppoſition to all carnal Luſts and Uncleanneſs.

The next is, Honesty and Juſtice in all our ways, in oppoſition to all Fraud and False-Dealing; Ver. 6. *That no Man go beyond and defraud his Brother in any Matter; becauſe that the Lord is the Avenger of all ſuch, as we alſo have forewarned you and testified.* I know ſome interpret theſe words, of ſome inordinate and unnatural Acts of Luſt and Uncleanneſs that were practis'd among the Heathens, not fit to be nam'd, of which God is the Avenger, as he was of the ſame or like Sins on *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*. They that thus interpret the words, were led to it by what went before, and what follows after them. But the moſt natural

ral and easy Sense of these words, which is most generally embrac'd, is a Dissuasive from all Deceit and Dishonesty; which is most properly to go beyond and defraud a Brother in matters of Trade, Bargain, or Commerce; either by falsifying in the Nature, Quality, or Quantity of Goods, or by over-reaching in the Price, or circumventing in the Way and Manner of uttering them. All which are the frequent and wicked Practices of our degenerate Age, wherein the ancient Simplicity and Plain-dealing of our Fore fathers, is in a great measure laid aside, and too many are fallen into the Study and Use of all the Methods of Deceit. Men labour to go beyond their Brother, not in Vertue and Goodness, which would be a noble Contention; but in Craft and Subtilty, which is the basest way of circumventing and undermining one another. If you observe the Course of the World, you will find Cunning more studied than a good Conscience, and the Mystery of Trade is become a Mystery of Iniquity. The Wisdom of the Serpent, is prefer'd before the Innocence of the Dove; and more walk in the crooked ways of Falshood and Deceit, than in the strait and plain Paths of Truth and Honesty: Which shews this Advice of the Apostle to be not only seasonable, but highly necessary; *Let no Man go beyond, or defraud his Brother in any Matter*: Where Justice and Honesty reign, there is the Seat of Love, and the Mansion of Peace and Tranquillity. There every one dwells in quiet and easy Habitations, sitting under their own Vines, and reaping the Fruits of their own Labours: whereas, on the contrary, where Fraud and Falshood abound, there are the Seats of Discord and Division, together with the Habitations of Cruelty and Oppression; every one fearing or feeling the sad and mischievous Effects of these things.

But the exceeding great Danger of Over-reaching and Defrauding our Brother, is here set forth by the Vengeance of God that will attend them: *For the Lord is the Avenger of all such*, as practise them; of which (saith the Apostle) *we have forewarned you, and testified*; having often assur'd and told you of it. Now God is the Avenger of all Fraud and Dishonesty, both in this Life, and the next: for tho Men may seek by many ways to hide or disguise their false and double Dealing, so as to avoid the Discovery of Men, and to keep out of the Clutches of the Law; yet the Curse of God will assuredly find them out, and punish them sundry ways.

In this World, he will punish them, either by withdrawing their Substance, and taking from them the ill-gotten Goods which they have taken from others, or withdrawing his Blessing, and mingling a Curse with all that is left to them; which will blast and imbitter it to them, and deprive them of all the Sweetness and Comfort in enjoying of them; or else, by bringing upon them the Shame and Ignominy of Cheats, who are hated and shun'd by all Mankind.

But if they escape all this here, the Vengeance of God will pursue and overtake them in the next World, where they shall dearly rue for all their Fraud and Injustice; for they shall be cast into that dreadful Dungeon, where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth; and shall there pay for all their ill-gotten Goods to the utmost Farthing. *St. James bids them go weep and howl, for the Miseries that are coming upon them; for all their Riches are corrupted, their Garments moth-eaten: their Gold and Silver is canker'd, and the Rust of them shall be a Witness against them, and shall eat their Flesh as it were Fire: they have heaped Treasure for the last Day; which shall then be melted down about them, to increase their Torment; James 5. 1, 2, 3.* For while Men are over-reaching one another, the Devil is all the while over-reaching them, and running away with their own Soul. So that to hope to thrive by Deceit and Cozenage, is utterly to mistake the Measures and Methods of Prosperity, which is only promoted by Honesty and Fair-dealing; for that brings the Blessing of God, that maketh rich: and not by the Arts of Fraud and Falshood; for they bring the Curse of God, which eats like a Canker, and consumes all. But to go on: the Apostle in the next Verse, renews his Exhortation to Purity, and reinforces his Caution against Uncleanness by another Argument, in these words; *For God hath not called us unto Uncleanness, but unto Holiness:* meaning, that the Holy Profession we have taken upon us, obliges us to Holiness, which will adorn and recommend it; and takes us off from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, which tends only to defile and disgrace it: *The Grace of God that brings Salvation, calls upon us to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present World; which is the best means to answer the End of our Calling, and to attain to the Reward of it: especially considering what the Apostle adds in the close; He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit: that is, every one*

that contemns these Calls and Admonitions of ours, which we receiv'd from Jesus Christ, as we read, *ver. 2.* all such do not so much contemn Man, but God, whose Calls and Commands they are; for we are his Ambassadors, to deliver his Mind and Message to you, and he hath given us his Holy Spirit to that end: so that to despise us, or the Word deliver'd by us, is to despise God himself who sent us, and to do despite to the Spirit of Grace, which he hath given to us.

This is briefly the Sum of this Day's Epistle, which we are to consider and apply to our selves.

As, *First*, having receiv'd of Christ and his Apostles, how we are to walk, so as to please God and profit our selves; let us learn to walk by those Rules, and to keep in the way they have chalk'd out for us; for that's the Way that leads to Life, tho few will find or walk in it. *He that walketh uprightly, (saith Solomon) walketh surely,* Prov. 10. 9. He that keeps to the Rules that God and Christ have set him, will be safe in his way, and secure of the End of it. He shall be guided by God's Grace here, and shall not miss of Glory hereafter.

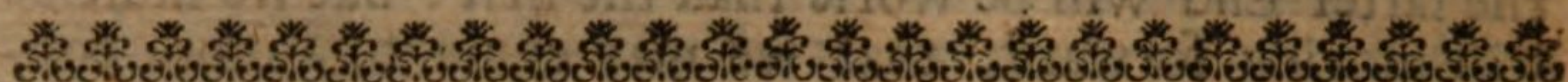
Secondly, From the Apostle's willing us to *abound more and more*, we may learn, not to rest in any lower Degrees of Grace, but to be still going on to Perfection: So St. Paul did, who tells us, that he was *still pressing forward to the Mark of the High-Calling of God, in Christ Jesus*; Phil. 3. 13, 14. His Example as well as Command herein, may teach us not to rest in any present Attainments, as if we were good enough already; but to be still going on from one degree of Grace to another, till it be compleated and finish'd in Glory: for to slacken our Course, or to stand still, is to lose ground, and they that do not go forward, generally go backward. There is no abiding at a stay in this Matter; if we do not grow better, we are in great danger of growing worse: for while we rest in the first and lower Degrees of Goodness, we are in the next Neighbourhood to a sinful State, and so are in continual danger of falling back into it. There are bad Inclinations within, that draw strongly unto Evil; and there are many and great Temptations without, that are apt to seduce and prevail upon us: so that if we are but just got out of a State of Sin and Error, and only enter'd upon the Confines of Vertue, we must not stay there for fear of being driven back again, and so
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the latter End will be worse than the first: but we must be still moving forward, that we may come to a more confirm'd State, and so more out of the Fear and Danger of relapsing. This is what we are here directed to, *viz.* not only to *walk in ways pleasing to God*, but to *abound in so doing more and more*; that is, daily to encrease in Vertue, and to be ever improving and growing in Grace, the better to secure our standing, and to be more and more out of the reach and fear of falling away.

Thirdly, Since Chastity is the Will of God, and all Uncleanness is his Hatred and Abhorrence; let us learn to practise the one, and to avoid the other: let us hate the very *Garment spotted with the Flesh*, and keep our selves *undefiled from the World*, that others beholding our chaste Conversation coupled with fear, may have nothing to say against us; but rather report, that God is in us of a Truth.

Fourthly, Since God is the Avenger of all Fraud and False-dealing, let us learn to walk honestly as in the Day, and renounce all the Deeds of Darkness and Dishonesty; let us not go beyond or defraud our Brother in any matter, which we see will draw upon us the Vengeance of God, both in this World, and that which is to come. Remember the time is coming, when all Disguises will be pull'd off, and all the evil Arts of enriching our selves and spoiling our Neighbour, will be laid open and expos'd before Angels and Men, to our endless Shame and Confusion of Face. Let us then amend all such Practices in time, and do nothing but what we may own now, and will stand the Trial of the last Day. In a word, being taught of God all that is necessary to Salvation; let us learn and practise the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, and full of all Good works. Let us not defile our Bodies with fleshly Lusts, nor our Fingers with filthy Lucre; but let us keep our selves pure from all Iniquity, that we may be at present fitted for, and at last receiv'd into the blessed Mansions of Peace and Purity. Which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c. Amen.





DISCOURSE XLVI.

The GOSPEL for the Second Sunday in Lent.

St. Matthew xv. 21 ——— 29.

Jesus went thence, and departed into the Coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Woman of Canaan came out of the same Coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my Daughter is grievously vexed with a Devil, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day, contains a Miracle done by our Saviour upon a certain Demoniack, or one possess'd with the Devil, whom he exorcis'd and dispossess'd with a word's speaking. The Manner and other Circumstances whereof, are hereafter related to us.

The Account of it begins thus: *Jesus went thence*, that is, from the Land of *Genesareth*, where they brought unto him all that were diseased, whom he healed of their several Maladies; and as many as touched the Hem of his Garment were made perfectly whole, as we read in the foregoing Chapter. From thence *he departed into the Coasts of Tyre and Sidon*, two Cities in *Phenicia*, bordering upon *Canaan*, famous for Merchandize and Traffick, especially in some Commodities. Our Saviour being come thither, *Behold, a Woman of Canaan came out of the same Coasts*. St. Mark styles her a Greek, a Syrophenician by Nation; Mark 7. 26. She was not of the Jewish Profession, but by Religion a Heathen, born near the Sea-shore called *Phenicia* and *Canaan*.

This Heathen Woman hearing the Fame of Christ's Miracles, and that he was come into those Parts, went on purpose to him; and cried with a loud Voice unto him, saying, *Have Mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David*. This was the usual Form of Prayer and Salutation, with which all the humble Petitioners address'd to him: which few

few Words when coming from the Heart, prevail'd more with him than the tedious Harangues of Hypocrites. They contain a hearty Acknowledgment of his Power and Goodness, and that coming from the Stock and Lineage of *David*, he was the true *Messias* and Saviour of the World.

But what was her Prayer and Request to him? Why that, as the following Words declare, was in the behalf of her *Daughter* who (she said) *was grievously vex'd with a Devil*; hoping and desiring to find some Pity and Relief from him.

But before we go any farther, 'twill be requisite to enquire what is here meant by being *vexed with a Devil*; who they were; and whether there be any such now in our days. For the

1st, To be vexed with a Devil, is to be possess'd with an evil Spirit; of which we find frequent mention in the New Testament. *Mat. 4. 24.* we read of Persons *possess'd with the Devil*; as also *Mat. 8. 16.* with many other places. Sometimes we read of Persons possess'd with evil Spirits, sometimes with unclean Spirits, sometimes with Spirits or Devils blind and dumb, and the like; Instances whereof we have many in the Gospel.

Now they that were thus possess'd are said to be troubled with evil Spirits, and here to be *vexed with a Devil*. They are in the Gospel call'd *δαμονιζόμενοι, ἐνεργούμενοι, and σεληνιζόμενοι, i. e.* Demoniacs, Lunatics, and possess'd Persons.

But how came those Possessions so frequent among the *Jews*, which were God's own People; and in our Saviour's time too, when we find or hear little or nothing of them in our days? Why, that (as a very Learned Man hath told us) may proceed from a Mistake of Words; for he conceives the same thing to be still among us, and hath been in all Times and Places, tho they are differently express'd, and call'd by other Names. To clear which, he gives it as his Judgment, that the Demoniacs and possess'd Persons in the Gospel, were no other than such as we call *Madmen and Lunatics*; at least that we comprehend them under those Names. This he proves at large by the Testimony of the Scriptures, by the Antient Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers, and likewise by the Writings of Learned *Gentiles*.

For the Testimony of Scripture, he cites first that of *St. John*; *He hath a Devil, and is mad*, *John 10. 20.* where the latter Words are an Explication of the former; and his having a Devil, is the same thing with his being mad. And indeed he that considers the wild Speeches and

Actions that proceed from Men under such Frenzys, contrary to all Reason, Sense, and the Use of other Men, can think them mov'd by no other than an evil Spirit. Beside, the extraordinary Strength that is found in such Persons, beyond others or themselves in their right Wits, can be ascrib'd to no other. And here we may distinguish between *Melancholia* and *Mania*, both which imply a Disturbance of the Mind, or an Alienation of the Understanding; the one is commonly attended with Fear, Silence, Sadness, and Retiredness; the other with Rage, Raving, Fury, and Actions suitable to them: And both are said in Scripture to be troubled and acted by evil Spirits. *Saul's* Melancholy is attributed to this; for 'tis said that *an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him*. And in the Gospel the same is attributed to Lunacy, and the Power of the Devil; as appears by another Place urg'd by this Learned Author in the New Testament; and that is *Mat. 17. 14, 15.* where 'tis said that a certain Man came to our Saviour, and kneeling down, said unto him, *Lord have mercy on my Son, for he is lunatick and sore vexed, and oftentimes falleth into the Fire and oft into the Water.* That this Lunatick was a Demoniack, or a Person possess'd with an evil Spirit, is evident by *St. Luke*; who speaking of this same Person, saith, *Lo! a Spirit taketh him, and he suddenly cryeth out, and it teareth him, that he foameth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him*; *Luke 9. 39.* And *St. Matthew* expressly declares of this Person, that our Saviour rebuk'd the Devil, and he departed out of him, *Chap. 17. 18.* Both which Places make it apparent, that he was possess'd of the Devil, who cast him sometimes into Fits of Phrenzy, and sometimes into Fits of the Epilepsy or Falling-sickness; and was of the same kind with that which seizeth Madmen, Lunaticks, and Epilepticks to this day.

This our Learned Author farther proves by the Testimony of the Fathers, particularly *Justin Martyr*, who writing of Persons seiz'd with evil Spirits, which sometimes cast and tumbled them on the Ground, saith, *ὡς δαιμονοκλήτους καὶ μαρτυρούμενοι καλεῖται πάντες*, i. e. whom all call'd Demoniacks or Madmen; making them Terms synonymous, and signifying the same thing. And we find a Canon in the Apostolical Constitutions, that if any have a Devil or is mad, let him not be put in Orders, or be admitted to pray with the Faithful.

Lastly, He proves this by the Testimony of the *Gentiles*, who generally had the like Apprehensions of Madmen and Luna-

Lunaticks, as Persons acted by evil Spirits. Hence they called them *Larvati*, which is the same with *Larvis*, i. e. *Demonibus acti*, Men acted by evil Spirits or Dæmons. So *Festus* describes *Larvati*, by *furiosi & mente moti, quasi Larvis exterriti*; that is, furious Persons, or Madmen, frightened out of their wits by Ghosts and Hobgoblins. From all which he perhaps wisely enough infers, that the *Demoniacks* and possess'd Persons we read of in the Gospel, were the same with Madmen, Lunaticks and Epilepticks in our days. I have spoken the more of this, upon the occasion of this Woman's Daughter being *vexed with a Devil*, to give a little Light into those *Demoniacks*, and Persons possess'd with evil Spirits, of whom we find so frequent mention in the Holy Scriptures.

But to go on; this Woman cry'd to our Saviour, *O Lord thou Son of David, my Daughter is grievously vexed with a Devil*. Where tho the Words seem to be a bare relating of her Case, without any Request or Petition in her behalf, yet the plain Meaning undoubtedly was, that he would exercise his Divine Power in curing of her.

But what Reply did our Saviour make to her? Why, the next Words tell us, that *he answer'd her not a Word*. Strange! that he who was upon all occasions so forward to do good, and to heal all manner of Distempers, should be here so backward, as not to give her a Word in answer. The reason hereof we shall see by and by: in the mean time she desisted not from her Cry, but rather heighten'd her Importunity; insomuch that *his Disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us*: that is, Send her away satisfy'd by granting her Request, that we may be rid of her Importunity. But *Jesus answer'd and said unto them, I am not sent, but unto the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*. This he gives as the reason of his not hearkning to the Petition of the Woman, or the Motion of the Disciples; because the Message on which he came was chiefly directed to the *Jews*, and confin'd to the House of *Israel*, who were his own peculiar People both by Descent and many other Privileges: these were his first Flock, tho many of them had err'd and stray'd from him like lost Sheep; yet his Errand was to reduce and bring them back to the Fold, to lead them to Repentance, and to do his Miracles to and before them. His Commission yet was not extended to the *Gentiles*; and therefore this Woman of *Canaan*, being a Heathen, and out of the Pales of the Church,

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Church, had no share either in his Doctrine or Miracles ; for *Jesus Christ was the Minister of Circumcision* (saith St. Paul) *for the Truth of God, to confirm the Promises made unto the Fathers* ; Rom. 15. 8. For this reason it was, that our Saviour answer'd nothing to the Prayer of the Woman, or the Relief of her Daughter : and yet this was done more for the Trial of her Faith, than with a Design to send her away unsatisfy'd.

However that be, *She came again to him, and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me.* She persisted in her Prayer, and ceas'd not her Cries and Tears, but fell down on her knees, and besought him to have pity on her, and relieve her Child.

But our Saviour seem'd still to turn a deaf Ear, and to give her not so much a Reply as a Repulse ; for *he answer'd and said, It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and cast it to Dogs.* Where the *Jews*, or the House of *Israel*, are call'd the Children, and the *Gentiles* or Heathens are call'd by the Name of Dogs ; and the Sense of our Saviour in those words is, that 'tis not fit to work those Miracles and Cures on the Heathens, who are profane and unclean Persons, which are design'd only for the *Jews*, the adopted Children and sanctify'd People of God. The confining of which great Privilege to the *Israelites*, and excluding the *Gentiles* from it, being express'd here proverbially, by not casting the Childrens Bread unto Dogs ; the Woman in the Strength of her Faith replies to him in the same figurative and proverbial strain, *Truth, Lord, yet the Dogs eat of the Crumbs which fall from the Master's Table.* Which words are a deep Confession of her own Unworthiness, and a humble casting of her self upon the Bounty and Goodness of the Lord, for the obtaining of some Degrees at least of Mercy and Favour at his hands. *Truth, Lord,* (saith she) that is, I must acknowledg that things are as thou hast said, that the *Israelites* were of old the only select People of God, dignify'd with many high and noble Privileges above others ; yet I hope the poor *Gentiles* are not wholly cast out of Favour, and left to despair of all Mercy, but that there may be a Door of Hope open'd to them, that by fervent Prayer knock at it, and that the infinite Love of God hath some Mercy in store for all his Creatures : for tho the Children alone sit at the Father's Table, and are fed first with the best Provisions, yet the Servants are admitted to wait and eat after them ; yea, the very Dogs are allow'd to lick
up

up what is left, and to feed upon the Remainders and Scatterings of the Table : and therefore we trust that the *Gentiles* may much more be admitted to some small share in the Mercies of the *Jews*.

But what was the Issue of all this Importunity? Why, *Jesus then answer'd and said unto her, O Woman, great is thy Faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her Daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Where our Saviour highly magnify'd her Faith, which carry'd her above and beyond all Difficulties, and therefore presently granted all that she desir'd. For he no sooner spake the word, but the evil Spirit left her, and her Daughter from that very instant of time was made whole. Great indeed is the Strength of Faith, especially when attended with Perseverance and Constancy; it can remove Mountains, and no Infirmities or evil Spirits are able to stand or stay before it, for it hath the Divine Power by Promise annex'd to it, and is even arm'd with Omnipotence. Now great Faith is where there are least Hopes and most Opposition, and where Love and the Will have the greatest hand in the Composition. To such Believers, God Almighty seems in a manner indebted, and counts himself engag'd to perform what they reasonably desire. Such was the Faith of this *Canaanitish* Woman, and such was the Effect and Issue that proceeded from it.

This is in short the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, from whence we may make the ensuing Lessons the Subject of this Day's Meditations. As,

1st, From this Woman of *Canaan's* having recourse to our Saviour, to have her Daughter cured of being vexed with the Devil, we may learn where to go, to be preserv'd from the Power of Satan's Temptations. *The Son of God was manifested to this purpose, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil*; which he accordingly did, by subduing his Kingdom, and weakning the Force of all his Temptations. And therefore we must betake our selves to him, to be deliver'd from them, who is alone able to do it for us. Christ himself told *St. Peter*, that *Satan had desir'd to winnow him as Wheat*, but he had pray'd for him, that his Faith should not fail : and that prov'd to be the best Prop and Support of it. When the Seventy return'd with Joy, saying, *Lord, even the Devils are subject unto us through thy Name*; he reply'd, *I beheld Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven*;
Luke

Luke 10. 17, 18. which signify'd the dethroning of the Devil, and the disseizing spiritual Wickednesses of their high Places. All which, together with the frequent Dispossellings we read of them, shew us our Saviour's compleat Victory and Power over them. So that now we are bid only to *resist the Devil, and he will flee from us*: and this Resistance must be by Prayer and Faith, which secure to us a Deliverance from him; for greater is he that is for us, than he that is against us.

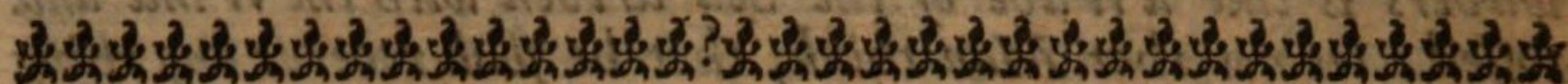
2dly, From our Saviour's answering this Woman of *Canaan* not a word, and shewing little or no regard to her first Suit, we may learn not to be discourag'd, if our Prayers are not always presently answer'd. He would not grant this Woman's Request immediately, because he had a mind to try her Faith, and to heighten her Importunity. God Almighty hath many times very wise and weighty Reasons for the denying or delaying the Grant of our Petitions: sometimes we are apt to ask things, that would be more pernicious than profitable for us; and then the Mercy is greater in the Denial, than it would be in the Grant. Sometimes we are not sufficiently sensible either of the Worth or the Want of what we ask; and then it is fit he should give us some time to consider what 'tis we ask, before he answer us. Sometimes we are not so well satisfy'd of his Power and Readiness to help us, as we should be, nor so fully convinc'd of our Dependence upon him, as we ought; and then 'tis no wonder if he defer his Answers a while, till we have better learnt these Lessons. Sometimes again he seems not to hear, because he would have us cry a little louder; and perhaps denies the first time, to see whether we will continue our Suit and increase our Fervency; intending to double his Returns according to our Requests, and to cast in a vantage Blessing for the Importunity. If our Petitions be not presently answer'd, we were best look into our selves, and examine the Cause; and 'tis ten to one but we may find it to proceed from one or more of these Reasons.

3dly, From our Saviour's granting her Request at last, we may learn the Efficacy and sure Success of fervent and persevering Prayer. *The effectual fervent Prayer of the Righteous* (saith St. James) *availeth much*: it conquers all Difficulties, and surmounts all Opposition. But then it must be accompany'd with Faith, and a firm Persuasion of the Power and Goodness of him we address to: so St. James adds,

adds, *Let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavers is like a Wave of the Sea driven with the Wind and tossed: let not that Man think, that he shall receive any thing at the hands of God.* James 5. 16. A double-minded Man is unstable in all his ways, and consequently unsuccessful in all his Petitions. If then we would obtain our Requests, we must, with this Woman of *Canaan*, continue instant in Prayer, watching thereunto with all Perseverance. We must never give out through Weariness, nor cease asking till we receive, and be daily lifting up pure Hearts and Hands without Wrath and Doubting: And then we shall not, in God's due time, miss of an Answer, nor want what is convenient for us.

4thly, From Christ's declaring his Mission to be only to the lost Sheep of *Israel*, and that shewing kindness to the *Gentiles* was the casting the Childrens Bread unto Dogs; we may learn to magnify and adore the infinite Goodness of God, in enlarging his Commission, and extending it to the *Gentiles* also: whereby we, who were Aliens and Outcasts, are now taken within the Verge of his Care, and the Pales of his Church. We that are of the Race of the *Gentiles*, are now no longer reckon'd among the Dogs, that are fed only with Scraps and Offals; but are taken into the number of Children, and so intitled to the Bread of Life that belongs to them. God the Father promis'd of old to give his Son the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Ends of the Earth for his Possession; Psal. 2. which Promise was perform'd by the Calling in of the *Gentiles* to all the Privileges of the Gospel, of which we at this day are the happy Partakers. So that now the Partition-Wall being broken down, and thereby being all united in the same Gospel-Covenant, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Bond or Free, Male or Female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

In short, the Gospel for this Day gives us to understand the universal and undistinguish'd Love of Christ to all Mankind; that all who by instant Prayer and a stedfast Faith adhere to him, shall not fail of an Answer to all their needful and reasonable Requests; and that in every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh Righteousness, shall be accepted of him: which is abundant Encouragement in all times, and upon all necessary occasions, to have recourse to him; which that we may all do, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us evermore. Amen.



DISCOURSE XLVII.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday in Lent.

Ephes. v. 1—15.

Be ye therefore Followers of God as dear Children; and walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an Offering and Sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling Savour: But Fornication and all Uncleanness, and Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches Almighty God to look upon the hearty Desires of his humble Servants, and to stretch forth the Right Hand of his Majesty, to be our Defence against all our Enemies.

To which end, the Epistle for the Day exhorts us to pursue the things that are good, and then we shall be protected from all Evil: according to that of St. Peter, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye are Followers of that which is good?*

The Epistle, which we are now to treat of, contains the two great Parts or Branches of every Christian's Duty, viz. What he is to follow, and what to avoid.

For the *First*, The Beginning of it will direct us; *Be ye Followers of God, as dear Children.* To be a Follower of any, is to give up our selves to his Guidance and Conduct, and to be led by his Direction.

To be a Follower of Christ, is to observe his Doctrine, and to tread in the steps of his Example. When Christ call'd any to be his Disciples, his usual Form or Phrase was, *Follow me*: and from thence they were stil'd Christ's Followers. The first that were thus call'd by him, were the twelve Apostles, whom he took from their several Trades and Callings, and made them the Attendants on his Person, the Hearers of his Doctrine, and the Eye-witnesses of his Mira-

Miracles; to the end that they should not only learn themselves, but teach others, and propagate his Doctrine in all parts of the World: And all that have been thus taught and converted by them, have ever since been call'd Christ's Followers. Their Duty is to learn of him as a Scholar does of his Master, which they may well do, he being a Teacher come from God, and so the best and ablest of all Masters. This he expects and calls for from all his Followers: *Learn of me*, saith he, Mat. 11. *And let the same Mind be in you, as was in Christ Jesus.* Neither is it enough barely to learn his Doctrine; but to be a Follower of Christ, is to follow his Example, and to do as he did. Hence we are bid to be *holy, as he that hath call'd us is holy*; and to *walk even as he walked*: not that we can keep pace with him in all his ways, or come up to the exact and inimitable pitch of his Holiness, but that we endeavour to be as like him, and to come as near him as we may. This is to be Followers of God *as dear Children*; for as Children commonly resemble their Parents in the Lineaments of the Face and the Qualities of the Mind, even so we are to labour after the greatest Likeness to our heavenly Father, and to be made conformable to the Image of his Son. Moreover, as Children are apt to follow the Ways and Actions of their Parents, so should we imitate our Father which is in Heaven, and labour as much to be Followers of him, as dear Children are wont to be of their tender Parents; being willing to learn of him, and to be guided by him, and in all things living and acting like the Children of the Most High.

But wherein are we to be *Followers of God as dear Children*? Why, that the next words will inform us; *And walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an Offering and Sacrifice unto God, of a sweet-smelling Savour.* Where the great thing in which we are call'd upon to follow him, is in the Grace of Love, the darling Attribute of God, and the principal Ray and Perfection of the Divine Nature: for *God is Love* (saith the beloved Disciple) *and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God.* This he hath in many ways express'd towards us: *God so loved the World* (saith St. John) *that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* And *Christ so loved us* (saith our Apostle) *that he gave himself for us, as an Offering for our Sins, and a Sacrifice unto God for their Expiation*; which, like the
Incense

Incense burnt on the Altar, yields a sweet Perfume, and sends up a grateful Savour in the Nostrils of God. This transcendent Love of Christ to Mankind, is not only to be remember'd, but in some measure to be requited and return'd by us. Love, we say, is the Loadstone of Love, and draws with a natural and pleasing Violence; and the stronger the Love is, the stronger should the Attractives be: and therefore that sacred Fire that burnt in Christ's Breast towards us, should kindle the flames of Divine Love in our Breast towards him. Indeed, if we consider what he is in himself, a Being of infinite Excellencies and Perfections; and likewise what he is towards us, a God of inexpressible Compassion and Kindness; we shall find such powerful Charms as are hard to be resisted, Endearments strong enough to melt a Heart of Stone, and to constrain the most obdurate Nature to love him.

And this Love of him is to be extended to and express'd by our Love to the Brethren: so St. John argues, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* His Love to us is to be both the Motive and the Pattern of our Love to our Neighbour, and must teach us to bear the same good-will to one another, as he hath shew'd towards us. Moreover, to *walk in Love*, is to continue, and to be still going on in Acts of Kindness and Beneficence; and to *love as Christ hath loved us*, is to extend it as far, and to the same Persons as he did: that is, by his Example to love our Enemies, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us; which will shew us to be the Children of the Most High, who is kind to the Unthankful and the Evil, as we read, *Mat. 5. latt. end. & Luke 6. 35.*

Thus we see how and wherein we are to be Followers of God as dear Children, which is chiefly in the great Acts and Duty of Love.

The *Second* Part of the Epistle shews us, what we are to avoid, to that end. And that is, all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh; together with all the evil Counsel and Company that lead to them, as the following Verses declare.

Against the former we are warn'd, *ver. 3, 4. But Fornication, and all Uncleanness, or Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints; neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking or Jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of Thanks.* Where we have a strict Charge and Caution

tion against all obscene Words and Actions, as altogether unbecoming the Name and Profession of Christians, who are call'd to higher and better things. And all that will be true Followers of the holy Jesus, must carefully shun and avoid them. Indeed, the Flesh is a home-bred Enemy, or a Traitor within us, which is most apt to betray and beguile us. And the Corruption of our Nature is such, that all our Care is little enough to watch and arm us against this Sin that doth so easily beset us. Hence it is that we find so many Warnings against it in Holy Scripture, which are now singled out and read to us at this Season, being a time of more than ordinary Strictness and Mortification.

But the better to enforce these Warnings upon us, the Apostle adds in the next words; *For this you know, that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, or of God.* Where he seeks to deter Men from these Vices, by the certain Punishment that will unavoidably attend them; by which they will be utterly excluded from all hopes of Favour, and be doom'd to lie for ever under the Frowns and just Indignation of Heaven. And lest any should feed and flatter themselves with vain hopes of escaping these things, the Apostle subjoins; *Let no Man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience:* Let none beguile you with any Allurements or false Opinions, that these are but slight things, and will be easily over-look'd; for these are the very Sins that brought Plagues upon *Sodom*, and will bring the like, or greater Vengeance upon those that practise them. Neither is there any way of escaping those Evils, but by hearkning to the Apostle's Advice, in the next words; *Be ye not therefore Partakers with them:* For if ye consent to and partake in their Sins, you must in their Punishment too. To prevent which, he goes on to mind these *Ephesians* of the happy Change made in them, by receiving the Gospel, and the many Benefits they had obtain'd; *For ye were sometimes Darkness, but now are ye Light in the Lord; walk as Children of the Light.* Where we may observe,

1st, The Misery of their Natural and Gentile State; *Ye were sometimes Darkness.*

2^{dly}, The comfortable Condition to which they were translated; *But now are ye Light in the Lord.*

3^{dly}, The

3dly, The Use and Application they were to make of it; therefore *walk as Children of the Light*. These things containing the Sum of this Epistle, and affording proper Matter for our Meditations upon it, must be a little particularly consider'd. And,

1st, Of the dark and disconsolate State of these *Ephesians*, before they receiv'd the Gospel; *Ye were sometimes Darkness*: which was so black and dismal, that it suffic'd him not to say, *Ye were sometimes blind or dark*, but ye were *Darkness* it self. And that denotes, the Ignorance, the Danger, and the Disconsolateness of their Heathen State.

As for their Ignorance, that was exceeding gross, a *Darkness* that might be felt: as appear'd in their Ignorance of God, of themselves, and of a Future State; in all which they were extremely in the dark, or at best had very obscure and confus'd Notions of them. Their gross Ignorance of God was seen in the Nature and Number of their Deities, which they multiply'd exceedingly; insomuch, that there was no kind of Creature, how vile and despicable soever, upon whom they bestow'd not Divine Honours: there was scarce an Herb in the Field but grew into a God, and their Gardens were not more fruitful in Plants, than they were in Deities; some offer'd Incense to a noisom Weed, and others shed religious Tears before the Leek and Onion: *O sanctæ gentes! quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis numina*; as the Poet derides them. And generally, the wisest of them fell down before Idols, the Workmanship of their own Hands. Thus as God made Man in his Image, so they made God in their own; yea, many of them deify'd their very Sickneses and Diseases, and Men became Idolaters to their own Infirmities. So gross was their Ignorance of God, that the Apostle truly said, *they were without God in the World*. Neither was their Knowledg of themselves much better, as appears by their vain and various Conjectures of the Original of Mankind; whom they conceiv'd at first to spring out of the Earth, like Herbs or Plants, by no other Power, than that of Nature. Some have thought, they started up out of the Earth by parts and piece-meal; and have reported, that at *Grand-Cairo* in *Egypt* have been seen Feet and Arms arising out of the Ground, which by the animating Power of the Sun, grew up and were form'd into Bodies. Thus the greatest Philosophers among the Heathens were in the dark, as to their first Production; and tho they found themselves to be Men, yet knew not how

how or whence they came so. Neither was their Knowledge greater

As to any Future State, or what should become of them after Death, being very much at a loss about the Immortality of the Soul. *Socrates*, who was reputed the wisest among them, speaks but very darkly and doubtfully in this matter; for being ask'd at his Death, what he thought of future Life, reply'd, it was *ἄδιλον πάντι, πλὴν τοῦ θεοῦ*; that is, unknown to any but to God. They dreamt indeed of *Elysian* Fields and pleasant Groves, to recreate and solace the Minds of the Vertuous and the Innocent with endless Delight; and likewise of dark and dismal Shades, where the guilty Souls shall be haunted with perpetual Fears and Terrors. But these were faint Conjectures of they knew not what, and serv'd only to shew, that a Heathen State was a State of gross Ignorance and Darknes.

And so it is likewise for the Danger and Disconsolateness of it: he that walketh in Darknes, knoweth not whither he goeth; he seeth not his way, and so is liable to stumbling and many a dangerous Fall: and as natural Blindness in our bodily Eyes, is a Calamity that exposeth to great Harm; so spiritual Blindness and Darknes in the Eyes of the Mind, lays Men open to far greater Evils. And 'tis no great wonder, if the Heathens, under this spiritual Blindness, wallow'd in all manner of Uncleaness; *For 'tis a shame even to speak of those things, which were done of them in secret, ver. 12.* And so did some of you (saith he) whilst you remain'd in that dark and gloomy State. Beside, Darknes you know is very disconsolate, and exposes to great Terrors and Affrightments: The Night suggests many Fears, every little Noise seems to be the Alarm of an Enemy, and every Motion like the Approach of a Thief. Fears or Frights are the Companions of Darknes, which give Disturbance to the Mind, and fill it with a thousand Bugbears. But spiritual Darknes is attended with Terrors of a higher and worse nature; it alarms the Soul with the sad Apprehensions of Guilt, and fills it with Fears of the Wrath of God due to it; and that makes it like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest.

2dly, This was the sad and gloomy State of these *Ephesians* before they embrac'd Christianity, of which the Apostle minds them, in these words; *Ye were sometimes Darknes, but now (saith he) are ye Light in the Lord.* And this will lead to the happy Change made in them, by their being

converted to Christianity, and the great Benefits both they and we enjoy by the Light of the Gospel; for that dispels the former Darkneſs of Paganism and Idolatry, ſcatters all the Clouds of Error and Ignorance, and ſets Life and Immortality in their true Light. The Goſpel diſcovers to us the Danger and Deformity of the Vices and leud Practices of the Heathens, which were not ſo fully known to them before: ſo that whatever Plea of Ignorance they may make to excuſe their Impieties, we can have no cloke for our Sins; for we are now enlighten'd with the Knowledg of God, of our ſelves, and of the Means of being happy. Beſide, the Terrors of Sin and Guilt are now in a great measure remov'd, by the Merits and Satisfaction of Chriſt; and Repentance is become as acceptable as Innocence: The Spirit of Fear and Bondage is gone, and we have receiv'd the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. So that *Light is ſown for the Righteous, and joyful Gladneſs for the True-hearted*. And being in all theſe Senſes turn'd from Darkneſs to Light,

3dly, The Apoſtle's Exhortation is, therefore *walk as Children of Light*: whereby he thus beſpeaks the *Ephesians*; However theſe black and abominable Vices are riſe among the benighted *Gentiles*, and you your ſelves liv'd in the committing of them, whilſt ye were in that dark and gloomy State; yet now being become Chriſtians, and having by the Light of the Goſpel, the Odiousneſs of thoſe Sins ſo clearly expos'd to your view, flee them as ſo many Brats and Imps of Darkneſs, and walk as Children of the Light, and of the Day; live as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt, doing nothing that may any way blemiſh or diſparage it, and doing all things that may tend to adorn and recommend it. Walk honeſtly as in the Day, and act all things as in the ſight of God and Men; avoid thoſe things that ſeek a Covert to hide their Obliquity, and ſhun all the Deeds of Darkneſs, that are put to ſhame and diſcomfited by the Light. Follow, as the next Verſe directs,

The Fruit of the Spirit, which is in all Goodneſs, and Righteouſneſs, and Truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Theſe things can bear the Light, and find the Acceptance and Approbation of God and Men.

But have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but rather reprove them, ver. 11. Mix not your ſelves with wicked Workers, nor be a Companion with any in Evil. So St. Paul exhorts, 1 Cor. 5. 11. *Not to keep Company if any* be

be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or Railer, or a Drunkard, or Extortioner, with such a one, no not to eat; that is, not to shew any liking to such Practices, nor contract any Intimacy with them that use them. These the Apostle stiles unfruitful Works of Darknes, in opposition to the Fruits of the Spirit before-mention'd, which bring forth Glory, and Honour, and Eternal Life; whereas, these yield nothing but Misery, and Shame, and Eternal Death. And therefore we should be so far from having any Fellowship or Delight, that we should rather reprove and detest such vile Practices: for 'tis a shame (as the Apostle goes on) even to speak of, and much more to act those things that are done of some in secret; things that require thick Darknes in the Commission, and lead to Blacknes of Darknes in the Conclusion. But all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the Light; for whatsoever doth make manifest, is Light: ver. 13. Meaning, that all such vile Abominations, how closely soever carry'd and conceal'd now, will shortly be discover'd and made manifest; for as Light is the proper Means of discovering what Darknes hides, so the Light of the Gospel at present, and the Light of the Day of Judgment hereafter, will lay open and expose all the hidden Works of Darknes: which should teach us to do nothing, but what will bear the Trial and Examination of both. And this will lead me to the

Conclusion or Application of this Epistle, in the last words; *Wherefore, he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.* The words, as to the Sense of them, are quoted out of the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 60. ver. 1. *Arise and shine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee:* Which is a Prophecy of the State of the Church under the Gospel, when Light is come into the World, and the Day-Star from on high hath visited us with Salvation; and therefore 'tis time to *awake out of Sleep, and to arise from the Dead.* Where Sin and Sensuality are compar'd; first, to a Sleep, partly for the Blindness they contract, and the Dreams and Delusions wherewith they deceive us; and partly for the Drowsiness and Inactivity they bring upon the Soul, and partly likewise for the Dangers and Surprize, to which they betray us. And to get free of them, is as fitly compar'd to *awaking out of Sleep*; because it opens the Eyes, rouses Men to Action, and puts them upon their guard

against all their Enemies, to which all Christians are here call'd, as they are elsewhere; *Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.*

Again, Impenitence and Hardness in Sin, is here compar'd to Death, because it destroys the Strength and Vigour of the Soul, deprives it of all Motion in the Ways of God, and renders it past feeling. And a Recovery out of it is here call'd a rising from the Dead: *You hath he quicken'd* (saith he elsewhere) *who were dead in Trespasses and Sins.* And here he calls upon us, not only to awake out of the Sleep, but to arise out of the Death of Sin: And for our Encouragement adds, in the close; *And Christ shall give thee Light.* And that in the double Sense of Light, as it signifies Knowledg, and as it signifies Joy, or the Light of God's Countenance.

(1.) Christ shall give thee the Light of Knowledg, and instruct thee in all his Ways: *The Secret. of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will teach them his Covenant*; Psal. 25. *He that doth the Will of my Father* (saith Christ) *he shall know the Truth, whether it be of God*; John 7. God delights to communicate his Mind to them that are willing to do it: he that hath, that is, useth the Knowledg that he hath, shall have it more abundantly; but he that hath not, or useth it not aright, shall be depriv'd of what he hath.

(2.) Christ shall give thee the Light of his Countenance, and fill thee with Joy and Peace in believing: *Light is sprung up for the Righteous, and joyful Gladness for the Upright in Heart.* They shall have inward Peace and Comfort here, and be filled hereafter with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

Thus I have briefly consider'd all the remarkable Parts of this Epistle; it remains then,

1. That we henceforth become Followers of God, as dear Children, and especially in the Divine Grace of Love, of which he hath set us the most noble, and the most unparallel'd Pattern.

2. That we forsake all things that are offensive and displeasing to him; especially all Uncleaness, and the other Works of Darkness, which are made manifest and reprov'd by the Light.

3. That we henceforth walk as Children of Light, doing and delighting only in things that can bear it; that the
Light

Light of the Gospel, which was given us for our Salvation, prove not at last to our greater Condemnation.

4. That we awake out of that Lethargy or Sleep, which Sin and Security hath lull'd too many into; that we be not deluded by Dreams, or impos'd upon by the false Shews and Appearances of this World, but open our Eyes in time, to see and seek for better things.

Lastly, That we rise from the Death of Sin to a Life of Righteousness, and that will bring us e'er long to Life everlasting: To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE XLVIII.

The GOSPEL for the Third Sunday in Lent.

St. Luke xi. 14—29.

Jesus was casting out a Devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the Devil was gone out, the Dumb spake; and the People wondered. But some of them said, he casteth out Devils, through Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils: And others tempting him, sought of him a Sign, &c.

IN this Gospel for the Day, we may observe these three remarkable things.

First, Our Saviour's dispossessing a dumb Devil.

Secondly, The ill Construction that some of the People made of it. And,

Thirdly, The good Use that we are to make of this, and all other Instances of his Divine Power. For the

First, His dispossessing of the Devil, and casting out deaf and dumb Spirits; of this we often read in the Acts of our Saviour, as they are related by the four Evangelists. But of the Nature of Evil Spirits, the Persons possess'd with

them, and the Manner of exorcising or casting them out, I had occasion to speak in the Gospel for the last Sunday; concerning the Woman of *Canaan's* Daughter being vexed with a Devil, and our Saviour's casting it out; to which Discourse I refer the Reader.

The dumb Devil here mention'd, is suppos'd by many to be a Spirit of Sadness and deep Melancholy, which is commonly attended with Silence, and such a Pressure upon the Animal Spirits, as make Men either unable or unwilling to speak, call'd therefore a dumb Devil, or a dumb Spirit: such was that which came upon *Saul*, when *the Spirit of the Lord departed from him*, and *an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him*; as we read, *1 Sam. 16. 14, 15*. Which evil Spirit is said to consist in the Perturbations of Sadness, Melancholy, and Despair; together with Rages, violent Furies, and other Motions and Excesses of the Hypochondriack Passions. Such likewise was that Spirit of Sadness and Melancholy that seiz'd upon *Ahab*, on *Naboth's* denying him his Vineyard; of whom we read, that he was *heavy and displeas'd, and laid him down upon his Bed, and turn'd away his Face, and would eat no Bread*; insomuch, that his Wife ask'd him the Cause of his Melancholy, and *why his Spirit was so sad?* *1 Kings 21. 4, 5*. Of such Disturbances of the Mind, by Fear, Sorrow, and Hypochondriack Vapours, we have many Examples in our own Time, which are thought to come under the Possession of evil Spirits, and dumb Devils, of which we so often read in Scripture.

Now the rebuking of this evil Spirit, by removing this Sadness and Melancholy, and restoring the Person to Joy, Comfort, and Chearfulness of Mind, by what means soever, is the casting out this dumb Devil, or dispossessing this evil Spirit. *Saul's* evil Spirit of this kind, was chas'd and charm'd away by *David's* Musick; which brought his Spirits into such a Composure and Harmony, as made him less liable to the Impressions of Fear, or any Satanical Operation. So we read in *1 Sam. 16. 23*. *It came to pass, when the evil Spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an Harp and played with his Hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil Spirit departed from him. And when that departed from him, the Spirit of the Lord return'd upon him, and he prophesied; 1 Sam. 19. 23*. But our Saviour here, without the help of Musick, or the use of any other Art, rebuk'd this dumb Devil, that he went out of the Man; And when the Devil was gone out, the Dumb spake.

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He who was before tongue-tyed, and had all the Organs of Speech stopp'd, had his Tongue loosen'd, and began to speak freely and fluently, to the wonder and astonishment of those that heard him.

But *Secondly*, what Effect had this upon the People? Why, some of them made a very wicked and perverse Interpretation of this Miracle, ascribing it not to the Power of God, but saying in the next Verse, *He casteth out Devils through Beelzebub the Chief of the Devils*: meaning, that he made use of some of the superiour Devils, to cast out the inferiour Spirits, that were subject to them. This *Beelzebub* in the Original signifies the God of Flies, who as they thought had Legions or Swarms of evil Spirits under him, flying about in the upper and middle Regions of the Air; over whom, he, as Prince of the Devils, had Power to throw them out of those that were possess'd with them. And to this they attributed Christ's dispossessing of them, and thought that in casting out Devils, he operated by this Power. Others therefore not thinking this a sufficient Demonstration of his Divine Power, to tempt him to a farther Trial of it, sought of him a Sign from Heaven; desiring of him some other Miracle or Token of his being sent from God, as by a Voice from Heaven, or some other Sign or Prodigy in it.

But what Reply did our Saviour make to these two sorts of Persons? Why, *Jesus knowing their Thoughts*, as well as hearing their Speeches, gave a full Answer to both. To the first, in the following part of the Gospel for this Day; to the latter, in the remaining part of this Chapter, which being out of this Day's Gospel, must be spoken to elsewhere.

To the first sort, who thought our Saviour us'd the Devil's Power to cast out Devils, he useth sundry Arguments to convince them of the Absurdity of such an Imagination. As,

1st, *He said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation; and a House divided against a House falleth: ver. 17.* If any King or Prince mean to support his Kingdom, he must not quarrel with his own Subjects, that are to uphold and defend him, nor cast out them that are doing of him Service; such Divisions and Civil Diffensions as these, will soon destroy his Kingdom: and if in an House or City the Inhabitants be divided one against

another, they necessarily fall first into Confusion, and then into Desolation.

If Satan also (saith he) be divided against himself, how shall his Kingdom stand? If there be a Division among the evil Spirits, and one Devil set himself against another, their Kingdom cannot long endure. For to oppose, and violently to eject one another, must bring such a Weakness, as will bring certain Ruin and Destruction upon the whole. Satan's Policy is greater than so; and therefore it must be absurd to imagine, that I (saith our Saviour) should cast out Devils thro *Beelzebub*, which should make such a Breach or Division among the Fiends of Darkness, as not only to endanger, but utterly to extinguish their whole Kingdom.

Again, 2dly, He farther argues; *If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your Judges.* By Sons here we are to understand the Scholars or Countrymen of the Jews, the Disciples of the Pharisees, who pretended to exorcise or cast out Devils in the name of the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*; the ordinary Form us'd by them in their Exorcisms. Now Christ thus reasons with the *Pharisees*, who were the great Blasphemers of his Miracles; If your Disciples or Countrymen thus cast out Devils by the God of *Abraham*, who hath the sole Power over them, why should you think or say, that I cast them out by any other, and much less by the Prince of Devils, whose Interest it is not to assist, but oppose me in such a thing, as tends to the Overthrow of his own Kingdom? *Therefore (saith he) they shall be your Judges.* They acknowledg that no Power but that of God, is able to overcome or eject evil Spirits, and that they do it only in his Name and by his Power; whereas you affirm it to be done by the Power of the Devil, which is to make the Devil cast out himself, and to be necessary to his own Destruction: which is so absurd, that your own Sons and Children will one day rise up against you, and condemn your Blasphemies.

From whence he infers in the next Verse, *If I then with the Finger of God cast out Devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you*; ver. 20. Where our Saviour alludes to the Miracles of *Moses*, which being own'd to be done by the Finger of God, prevail'd above all the Illusions of the Magicians, and was a plain Evidence that he was sent from God to be the Ruler and Saviour of *Israel*. In like man-

manner, if I (saith our Saviour) by the Power of God cast out Devils, and act herein as *Moses* did by the Finger of God, you may well enough conclude my Mission to be divine, and that I am sent from God as the *Messias*, to be the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind.

This he farther proves, 3^{dly}, from the Mastery he had gain'd over the Devil, who would not quit his Hold, if he did not know and find Christ's Power to be superiour to his; which he illustrates by the Resemblance of a *strong Man arm'd, who keepeth his Palace, and his Goods are in peace and safety*, against any that is inferiour in Strength to him. *But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his Armour, wherein he trusted, and divideth his Spoils.* If any come with greater strength against him, he seizeth his Armour and Goods, and becomes Master of all. The Sense whereof is, that the Devil will not be cast out of Possession, except one arm'd with a Power superiour to his come and conquer him. And therefore Christ's casting out Devils, is an Argument that his Power is greater than theirs, or else (as *St. Matthew* speaks to the same purpose) *how can any enter into a strong Man's House, or spoil his Goods, except he first bind the strong Man, and then spoil his House, and plunder his Goods?* *Mat. 12. 29.* So that Christ's dispossessing of Satan, and making him quit his Hold, plainly shews that Christ hath master'd him, that his Power is above his, and that he hath subdu'd him and all inferiour Spirits under his feet. To which our Saviour adds that proverbial Saying, *He that is not with me, is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth:* that is, he that is not on my side in this Quarrel, taketh part with mine Enemy, and engageth himself against me; and he that gathereth not what Force he can for me, doth what in him lies to scatter mine. For as Christ is Satan's declar'd Enemy, by disarming and dispossessing of him, so they that join with him by not believing on Christ, are his Enemies too, and can have no share or Benefit by his Victory over him. By all which our Saviour proves, that his casting out of Devils was not by any Power of theirs, but his own, which was far superiour to it. But

Thirdly, Here is imply'd a Caution touching the right Use of this dispossessing Doctrine, that we set our selves against that Satanical Power which Christ ejected, lest the casting
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out of one Devil serve but to make way for the return of that and many more, and so render the latter end of that Man worse than the beginning.

This is express'd by way of Parable or Similitude, in the following Verses; *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return to my House, whence I came out: and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnish'd. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other Spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last State of that Man is worse than the first.* The Sense of which words is, that when an evil Spirit of Lust, Pride, Envy, Malice, or the like, is by the good Spirit of God thrown out of a Man, it grows restless and impatient, and seeks by all ways to return again to his former Habitation; the Devil like a roaring Lion going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour. So that without great Watchfulness and Care, the ejected Spirit will come back again to his former Hold, and bring with him a greater Force of evil Spirits, to possess and torment him, and so make the Condition of that Man worse than before he was ejected.

Whilst our Saviour was arguing and discoursing of these things, *Behold! a certain Woman in the Company, in a kind of Rapture, lifted up her Voice, and said, Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou hast suck'd.* St. Matthew tells us, in relating of this matter, that his *Mother and Brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him; but Christ, who would not be hinder'd from the Business he came about by any Relations, answer'd, Whosoever doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother; Mat. 12. 49, 50.* And here, upon this Woman's breaking out in praise of his Mother, and pronouncing her Blessed that bore and suckled him, he said, *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* Whereby he sought to divert them from earthly and fleshly Considerations, and to direct them to more spiritual and heavenly Meditations; letting them know, that a true Follower of his was dearer to him than any Relation that was otherwise; and *Mary* was not so much blessed for conceiving him in her Womb, as she was by receiving his Word into her Heart.

This is the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which may help to instruct us in many useful and important Lessons,

As,

As, 1st, From Christ's dispossessing the Devil, we may be abundantly satisfy'd of the Divinity of his Power; for no Power less than that was able to dethrone that Prince of Darkness, and destroy that usurp'd Dominion he exercis'd over the Bodies and Souls of Men. *St. John* makes this the great End and Design of his Coming, *1 John 3. 8. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil.* And this he effectually did, by vanquishing his Power, and subjecting him under his feet. By this he hath bound the strong Man armed with Rage and Cruelty, and put him in Chains of Darkness; spoiling Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, triumphing over them: so that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World. This we find the Devils themselves acknowledging, saying, *We know thee who thou art, Jesus thou Son of God, art thou come to torment us before the time?* They besought him not to send them into the Abyss, owning his Power, and submitting to it: which plainly proves his Divinity, and that he hath all Power in Heaven and Earth, and under the Earth. Hence we find the Apostles saying to him, *Lord, the very Devils are subject to us through thy Name.*

2^{dly}, From Christ's arguing against the *Pharisees* and others, who ascrib'd his casting out of Devils to *Beelzebub* the chief of the Devils; we may learn to beware of all such perverse Interpretations of Christ's Miracles: for this is that unpardonable Sin or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour tells us shall not be forgiven in this World, nor that which is to come. This we may learn from our Saviour's Discourse in the 12th Chapter of *St. Matthew*, where after he had confuted the Blasphemy of the *Pharisees* in this point, he adds, *Ver. 31, 32. That all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven: And whosoever speaketh against the Son of Man, shall be forgiven; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.* Not for want of Mercy and Goodness enough in God, but for want of Grace or a Capacity in the Subject, who maliciously resists the Way and Method of obtaining Pardon, which is only by Faith in Christ, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, whose Works he opposes, and whose Miracles he despiseth: and he that doth so, renders himself utterly incapable of all Pardon; for such an obstinate holding out
against

against the Works of God, and imputing them to the Devil, bids a manifest defiance unto God, and the Way contriv'd for Man's Salvation; a wilful persisting wherein so hardens the Heart, and sears the Conscience, as to leave no room for Repentance, without which no Pardon can be had: which should teach us to beware of this Sin, and to watch against all the steps and degrees that lead to it.

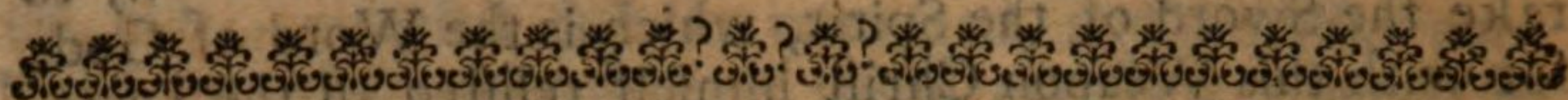
3dly, From Christ's power over the Devil, we may learn not to fear his Assaults, nor yield to his Temptations; but to resist him stedfast in the Faith, for he is only a vanquish'd Foe, whose Power is broken, and is no more formidable than a dead Lion, or a painted Serpent. His Sting is taken out, so that tho he may hiss, he cannot hurt us; he may tempt and sollicit, but cannot constrain us, and without our own Consent can never prevail against us. *Resist the Devil* (saith St. James) *and he will flee from us*: 'tis but to keep our ground, and we are sure to win the Field, for Christ hath subjected all our Enemies under our feet, and by the Power of his Grace hath made us more than Conquerors over them. Let us not then fear or despond under any of his Attempts upon us, but turn the deaf ear to all his Temptations. Christ hath arm'd us against him, and his Grace will be sufficient to repel all his Force; and therefore we may in all his Onsets say with our Saviour, *Get thee behind me, Satan.*

4thly, From the unclean Spirit's going out, and coming again with greater violence, we may learn, if we have gain'd any point upon Satan, or any of his Temptations, not to neglect our Watch, but still to be upon our guard against him; for he is ever looking for an opportunity of returning upon us, and tho he may find his former Seat swept from some Filth, and garnish'd with some outward Shews, yet if we are not aware of him, he will come again and bring seven Spirits more wicked than himself, to enter in and dwell there; and so render matters worse than they were before. The Devil is a subtle Adversary, who is ever watching his Opportunities, and will be still improving his Advantages to the utmost upon us; and therefore St. Peter wills us to *be sober and vigilant, because our Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*; 1 Pet. 5. 8. St. Paul bids us to put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil Day; and having done all, to stand, putting on the Shield of Faith, and the Breast-plate of Righteousness, to guard us

us against all the fiery Darts of Satan : but above all, to take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ; for with this Weapon Christ himself resisted all the Temptations of the Devil, urging Scripture against him, saying, *It is written* to the contrary, to all that he offer'd him. For which reason, the Author to the *Hebrews* styles the Word of God *a two-edged Sword*, quick and powerful, that cuts every way, and will secure us against all Assaults. And this will lead us to the

Last Inference to be drawn from this Gospel ; and that is, from our Saviour's pronouncing those blessed above all other Persons that hear the Word of God and keep it, to exhort us to the due Observation of both. Hearing is indeed the great Instrument of Knowledg and Instruction ; *Faith comes by Hearing* (saith the Apostle) *and Hearing by the Word of God* : for how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a Preacher ? Rom. 10. 14, 17. Moreover, Hearing is the ordinary way and means of Salvation ; so saith God by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Hear, and your Soul shall live*, Isa. 55. 3. But yet 'tis not all Hearing that is sufficient to this end ; we must be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, otherwise we shall but deceive our own Souls. The Word of God is not to be hung up only as a Jewel in the Ear, but must come into the Heart, and appear in our Lives and Conversations, before it can bring us to eternal Life : 'tis they that hear the Word and keep it, that are alone blessed in their Deed. Our Saviour compares such as build their Hopes upon Hearing only, to the foolish Man that built his House upon the Sand ; where when the Winds blew, and the Storms beat upon it, it fell, and great was the Fall thereof : whereas they that added Doing to their Hearing, are liken'd to the Wiseman that built his House upon a Rock, where when the Rains descended, the Floods came, and the Winds blew and beat upon the House, it fell not, but stood firm against any Tempest, because it was founded on a Rock.

In a word then, if we will build for Eternity, and lay a good Foundation for the time to come, we must receive the Word into our Hearts, lay it up in our Memories, and cause it to bring forth Fruit in the Course of our Conversation ; and then we shall be sure in the end to reap everlasting Life : which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE XLIX.

The EPISTLE for the Fourth Sunday in *Lent*:

Gal. iv. 21, to the end.

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law? For it is written, that Abraham had two Sons, the one by a Bond-Maid, the other by a Free-Woman; but he who was of the Bond-Woman was born after the Flesh, but he of the Free-Woman was by Promise, &c.

THE Church, in the Collect for this Day, acknowledges that the best of us, by our evil Deeds, do worthily deserve to be punish'd; and therefore prays, that by the Comfort of God's Grace we may be mercifully reliev'd, thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Epistle for this Day sets forth the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and pursues the general Design of the whole Epistle to the *Galatians*; which was to vindicate the Liberty of the Gospel from the *Judaical* Yoke, against some who would impose it upon the converted *Gentiles*, and thereby hinder the progress of the Gospel among them. The Portion of Scripture selected for this Day's Epistle, supposes and refers to this Controversy, which was much debated in the days of the Apostles; but being long since antiquated, and now laid asleep in our days, I shall no farther revive it, than is necessary to shew, as we are this day led, what this Controversy was, how it was manag'd, and what use we are to make of it. For the

First, The Controversy then started, and warmly debated, was concerning the Obligation of *Moses's* Law: not the Moral Part of it, consisting of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, for that was own'd by all to have a perpetual and indispensable Obligation; but the Ritual or Ceremonial Part of it, consisting of Sacrifices, Washings, and many

many other Types and Ceremonies, which being only Shadows of good things to come, vanish'd when the Substance came; and being all fulfill'd in Christ, ceas'd of course at his Appearance.

However, there were some false Teachers in those days crept into the Churches of *Galatia*, and other Churches, that strictly urg'd the Observance of the *Mosaical* Ceremonies; and so made it necessary to Justification, not only to have Faith in Christ, but to join with it the Works of the Law. These false Teachers had prevail'd so far, as to shake and corrupt the Faith of many; which made the Apostle marvel, how they were so soon remov'd from him, that call'd them into the Grace of Christ, to another Gospel; Chap. 1. 6. And likewise sharply to rebuke them, saying, O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitch'd you, that ye should not obey the Truth, but fall from the Grace of Christ to the Works of the Law? Chap. 3. 1, 2, &c.

Against these Corrupters of the Faith, that urg'd Circumcision and other *Judaical* Rites, and blended them with Christianity, St. Paul, who was the great Apostle of the Uncircumcision, sets himself with a more than ordinary Zeal and Indignation; telling the *Galatians*, that tho these Teachers might seem zealously to affect them, yet 'twas not well; for they would exclude you, saith he, from the Truth, merely that you might affect their Persons, and embrace their Errors. And therefore he earnestly cautions the *Galatians* against them in that Chapter; and here

In the Epistle for this Day, he comes more closely to reason the matter with them, from the Faith of *Abraham*, and the Promise made to him; saying in the beginning, Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law: where he intimates, that some were so fond of the Law, as even to desire to be under it, and prefer'd the Yoke of legal Rites and Ceremonies before the Liberty of the Gospel, which delivers from it. Of such as these, he asks the Question, Do ye not hear the Law? to which if you will hearken, you may plainly see your selves confuted in it: For it is written, that Abraham had two Sons, the one by a Bond-Maid, the other by a Free-Woman: that is, Abraham who was the Father of all the Faithful, is in Scripture said to have two Children by two Women; the one by *Hagar*, who was his Bond-Maid or Concubine, and that denotes the Bondage of the Law; the other by *Sarah*, who was his Wife and a Free-Woman, and that denotes the Freedom of the Gospel.

Now

Now of these two, *he who was of the Bond-Woman*, saith he, (that is, *Hagar's Child*) *was born after the Flesh*; in a mere natural way, which represents a State of Nature, as opposite to a State of Grace in Christ: *But he who was of the Free-Woman* (that is, *Sarah's Child*) *was by Promise*; i. e. above or beside the ordinary Course of Nature, by the Power of God, and by virtue of a Promise made to *Abraham*, which represents the State of the Gospel, and the Grace and Favour of God promis'd in it to our Faith in Christ, who was of the Seed of *Abraham*, in whom all the Nations of the Earth were promis'd to be blessed. *Which things* (as the Apostle goes on) *are an Allegory*, that is, a Figure or Resemblance; so the word Allegory signifies, viz. a figurative way of expressing one thing by another: for it follows, *these are the two Covenants*, the Law and the Gospel, which are signified or set forth by these two Mothers, *Hagar* and *Sarah*, and the two kinds of Issue proceeding from them, *Ismael* and *Isaac*.

The one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to Bondage, which is Agar. And the better to make out this Resemblance, he tells us, *that this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia*; the Place where the Law was given, and is out of the Bounds of the Land of Promise: in which respect it *answereth to Jerusalem that now is, and is in Bondage with her Children*; that is, 'tis parallel or agreeable with the present State of those *Jews* or *Hagarens*, that sprung from *Ismael*, who are bound by their Laws to Circumcision and other *Jewish* Observances, and so with *Agar* and her Issue, are still in a servile Condition.

But Jerusalem (saith he) *which is above, is free, which is the Mother of us all.* Meaning, that *Sarah* and her Issue, which denote the Gospel, or the New *Jerusalem* that is above, are all Free-men and Citizens of Heaven: and being descended from this Free-Woman, who is the Mother of us all, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*; we are thereby freed from all the Mosaical Rites, and may obtain Justification and Life Eternal without them. By which we see the Liberty of the Gospel asserted and prefer'd before the Thraldom and Bondage of the Law; which if rightly understood, and well consider'd, will be found matter of great Joy and rejoicing to all Christians: *For it is written, Rejoice thou Barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more Children than she that hath a Husband.* The words are written in the 54th of

of *Ijaiah*, ver. 1, &c. Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with Child; for more are the Children of the Desolate, than the Children of the married Wife, saith the Lord, &c. Which words are a Prophecy of the free and flourishing State of the Church under the Gospel, which should be enlarg'd by the Accession of the *Gentiles*; and she who was before barren and desolate, should have many Children and Profelytes, and thereby increase and multiply into a numerous Offspring, who were to be advanc'd above the beggarly Elements and Rudiments of *Moses's* Law, and put into a higher Form by the more spiritual and manly Institutions of the Gospel.

These Blessings are, in the next words, apply'd to all good Christians; *Now we, Brethren, as Isaac was, are the Children of the Promise.* For as *Isaac* was the natural Seed of *Abraham*, not by ordinary Means, *Sarah* being then past Age; but by the strength of God's Promise, of giving him a Son in his old Age: so are we the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, not by natural Generation, but by virtue of that Promise, that in his Seed should all the Nations of the Earth be blessed. By which we, even as *Isaac* was, may be said to be the Children of the Promise.

But lest we should be too much lifted up with the Thoughts of these Privileges, the Apostle adds a cooling Consideration to keep us humble, in the following words; *But as then, he that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now:* that is, we must expect Trouble and Persecution from the evil Men of this World, before we shall inherit the Blessing. For as *Ismael*, the carnal Seed of *Abraham* born after the Flesh, mock'd and persecuted *Isaac*, his promis'd Seed born after the Spirit, as we read, *Gen.* 21. 9. even so they who adhere to legal and carnal Ordinances, and expect Justification thence, will revile and persecute the spiritual Sons of *Abraham*, who (as he did) cast themselves upon Faith in Christ, and seek Salvation thence. Of this, Christ himself warn'd his Disciples; saying, *In the World ye shall have Tribulation.* And the Apostle to the same purpose, *They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution;* and through many Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: which may teach us to look and to prepare for them. To encourage us hereunto, our Saviour hath annexed Blessedness to the Persecuted, and exalted them far above their

Persecutors. So the Apostle here from the Sacred Story tells us, that *Ismael* the Persecutor was to be cast out, and *Isaac* the Persecuted was to inherit: *Nevertheless what saith the Scripture, Cast out the Bond-woman and her Son; for the Son of the Bond-woman shall not be Heir with the Son of the Free-woman.* This Saying of Scripture is written *Gen. 21. 10.* where the Issue of *Hagar* were forbidden to inherit with the Issue of *Sarah*, but rather to be thrown out of *Abraham's* Family; neither were the Children of the Flesh to partake of the Blessing with the Children of the Promise: the former were to be cast out and rejected, and the latter only to be receiv'd and rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven. In like manner, they that look for Justification by the Works of the Law, will be cast out of all Favour with God; and they that depend upon Faith in Christ, shall alone find Acceptance with him, and become Heirs of Glory.

From all which, the Apostle infers the Persons to whom this Blessing belongs, and they are all good Christians; saying in the Close of the Epistle, *So then, Brethren, we are not Children of the Bond-woman, but of the free;* which is the same with what he elsewhere tells us, *that we are not under the Law, but under Grace:* for the Children of the Bond-woman being born under the Law, were oblig'd to Circumcision, and subject to all the carnal Ordinances; they were under the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law, which was so heavy and burdensom, that, as *St. Peter* tells us, *neither they nor their Forefathers were able to bear it, Acts 15. 10.* for by that they were bound up in all the Punctilio's and Actions of human Life, and few or no things were left indifferent to them: they were not at liberty for their Meat or Drink, nor for what they should put on, nor yet for the Times and Manner of Washing; but were prescrib'd to as to their Diet and Apparel; and many things, in their Nature indifferent, were prohibited and made unlawful to them: they had a Hand-writing of Ordinances against them, which seal'd up many things from them, with touch not, taste not, handle not. Their numerous and costly Rites and Sacrifices were impos'd upon them by the same Tye of Necessity and Holiness, as the weightier Matters of the Law, and the Punishment of their Neglect was equally severe; which made them justly stil'd a Yoke, and such a one too, as was very heavy and hard to be borne. This was the State and Condition of the Children of the Bond-woman, who were in Bondage to these Rudiments: but *we* (saith the Apostle) *are not Children of the Bond-woman; we are not descended*

ded from *Agar* the Handmaid, as the *Ismaelites* and *Hagarens* were, who are therefore subject to these things; but we are *Children of the Free-woman*, being descended from *Sarah* and her Son *Isaac*, as it is written, *In Isaac shall thy Seed be called*. By this Descent we are the Children of the Promise, and are no longer under the Law, but under Grace; for Christ hath taken that heavy Yoke of *Jewish Ceremonies* from off our Necks, and hath substituted in its room the easy Yoke of Faith and Repentance: He requires now no other Circumcision than that of the Heart; he calls for no other Calves, but those of the Lips, to be render'd to him; nor does he expect any other Sacrifices, but those of a humble and contrite Spirit; he hath blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances, that was against us, and nail'd it to his Cross; by which he hath freed his Church from any farther Obligation to, or Observance of it: in a word, he hath dissolv'd the whole Frame of the Ceremonial Law, and thereby verifi'd what himself affirms, that *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden is light*; Mat. 11. 32.

This is the happy Condition of the Children of the free Woman, in which Number we are, being instated in all the Privileges of the Gospel, and translated from a State of Misery and Bondage into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; by which we become free Denizens of the Kingdom of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter.

This is in brief the Sum and Sense of the Epistle for this Day, the Use and Application whereof we have in the first Verse of the next Chapter. *Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage*; where we are exhorted to stand fast both in the right Use, and in the Defence of this comfortable Doctrine of Christian Liberty.

1st, I say, We are to continue stedfast in the right Use of our Liberty, without perverting or abusing it to ill Purposes, by using it as a *Cloak of Maliciousness*, or making it a pretence for Disorder and Disobedience. Now the right Use of our Liberty consists,

(1.) In satisfying our Consciences in the free Use of indifferent things without any Scruple or Doubtfulness; looking upon every Creature of God as good, if us'd with Temperance and Thanksgiving; not doing any thing with an Opinion of Holiness, which God hath no where commanded, nor abstaining from any thing with an Opinion of Unholiness, which God hath no where forbidden; but to use them freely, as

things left in our own power, keeping still to the Rules of Sobriety towards our selves, of Charity to our Neighbours, and Loyalty to our Superiors.

(2.) It consists in avoiding all judging or censuring our Brethren in the free Use or Forbearance of such indifferent Matters; for since God hath granted to us a Liberty in these things, why should we pass Sentence upon any for the Use of them? In such Cases we may ask the Question, *Who made thee a Judg?* and *what hast thou to do to judg another Man's Servant?* to his own Master he standeth or falleth.

(3.) The right Use of our Christian Liberty consists in the more free, ingenuous and chearful serving of God that gave it: This is the Use we are frequently advis'd to make of it, that being made free from Sin, we should be the Servants of God; and being rescu'd from the Bondage we were in to our Enemies, we should serve him without Fear in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Life. This is the right Use of our Liberty, in which we are all to stand fast, avoiding all Abuse of it, either by an intemperate Use of God's Creatures, or by using our Liberty to the Scandal and Offence of weak Brethren, or by making it a Plea for Disobedience to our lawful Superiors; as if our being freed from the Mosaical Rites and Ceremonies, had set us free from all the Rules of Order and Decency in God's Service, and let us loose to all manner of Schisms, Divisions and Disorders in the Church of Christ, which is to put one of the best of Things to one of the worst of Uses: against which St. Peter cautions all Christians in 1 Pet. 2. 16. *As free, but not using your Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness, but as the Servants of God.*

2dly, We are to stand fast as in the right Use, so in the Defence and Maintenance of our Christian Liberty, that we be not entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage. The great Invaders of Christian Liberty, in the Apostles Days, were those false Teachers, who crept into the Churches of *Galatia*, *Corinth* and *Philippi*, to spy out their Liberty, that they might bring them into Bondage: to which end, they preach'd up Circumcision, and urg'd the antiquated Rites of *Moses's* Law upon the converted *Gentiles*; and by that means betray'd their Liberty, and brought many into Bondage, as we read, *Gal.* 2. 4. & *Chap.* 4. 9. Against these the Apostle strenuously argu'd, and caution'd all Christians in those several Churches, and gave no Place by Subjection to those false Brethren, no not for an hour, that the Truth of the Gospel might continue with them; *Gal.* 2. 5. The great Infringers of Christian Liberty, in our Days, are of two sorts: (1.)

(1.) Of those who make more Things necessary to be believ'd and done, than are warranted by the Word of God.

(2.) Of those who make more things unlawful, and necessary to be left undone, than God hath made so.

Of the first sort are the Church of *Rome*, who impose new and uncommanded Doctrines and Practices upon the Consciences of Men, which God has no where requir'd of them; as Transubstantiation, worshipping of Images, praying to Saints, and the like; which, tho void of all Authority and Foundation from Scripture, are yet obtruded as Articles of Faith necessary to be believ'd and done in order to Salvation, and urg'd with Anathema's, Curses, and upon pain of Damnation: which is *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, and is a gross Infringement and Violation of our Christian Liberty.

Of the other sort are the Sectaries and Dissenters of our Days, who make more things sinful, and necessary to be let alone, than God hath made so; which is a plain Addition to God's Word, and an Abridgment or Diminution of our Liberty; such is their making a Form of Prayer unlawful, kneeling at the Sacrament sinful, and using such a Garment abominable: All which being in themselves lawful and indifferent, to fix Unlawfulness or Sinfulness upon them, is to add to God's Word, and to take from our Liberty; and therefore as *touch not, taste not, handle not*, were justly accounted Superstition and Will-worship in the Apostles Days, so kneel not, pray not by a Form, use not such a Garment, may be reckon'd no better in ours: and being enjoin'd, by the Authority of the Church and Government under which we live, to refuse Conformity to them, must be great Stubbornness and Disobedience.

To draw then to a Conclusion; since Christ hath, at a dear Rate, purchas'd a Liberty for his Church, and we are no longer Children of the Bond-woman, but of the free, let us endeavour to make a good Use of it, and likewise take care not to lose or betray it. The Use, we see, we are to make of it, is, the more freely and chearfully to serve God, that gives us this Freedom, and not to take occasion from thence to displease and dishonour him: neither are we easily to part with it, by subjecting our selves to new Doctrines, or uncommanded Precepts or Prohibitions; but being the Servants of God, we may not become the Servants of Men, so far as to make them Masters of our Faith or Conscience in either, but stand fast in the Freedom purchas'd for us in both; and by thus asserting our Liberty now, we shall e'er long be translated to the more glorious Liberty of the Sons of God: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE L.

The GOSPEL for the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

St. John vi. 1—14.

Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias; and a great Multitude followed him, because they saw his Miracles, which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a Mountain, and there he sate with his Disciples, &c.

IN the Collect for this Day we beseech Almighty God, that we, who for our evil Deeds do worthily deserve to be punish'd, may, by the Comfort of his Grace, be mercifully reliev'd thro Jesus Christ our Lord.

Accordingly, the Epistle for the Day shews the Relief we receive by him in our Souls, by a Freedom from the Yoke of the Mosaical Law.

The Gospel for the Day shews the Relief that Mankind found by him in their Bodies, by healing their Distempers, and supplying their Necessities. It begins with an account of our Saviour's Motion from place to place, and the many Miracles he wrought wherever he came, by healing the Maladies of all that came, or were brought to him; which confirms what is said of him, *Acts 10. 38. He went about doing good to the Bodies and Souls of Men.*

After our Saviour had staid awhile at *Jerusalem*, and there done many miraculous Cures on infirm and diseased Persons; at which the *Jews* took great Offence, because some of them were done on the Sabbath-day, and therefore sought to kill him; of which, and his Reasoning with them, we have an account in the foregoing Chapter: he remov'd from thence, and went over the Sea of Galilee; St. *Luke* calls it, *The Lake of Gennesareth*, for so it was; call'd the Sea of Galilee, from the Confluence of many Waters into it; as also, the Sea of Tyberias,

Tyberias, because the City of Tyberias was situate upon it. Where, when our Saviour had landed, a great Multitude followed him, because they saw his Miracles, which he did on them that were diseased. Miracles draw strongly, especially such as are Salutory and Medicinal; for so our Saviour's generally were: and he that can do such, shall never want Followers and Admirers. But tho' the Multitude attended him mostly for the Good of their Bodies, yet he always took the Opportunity of imparting something to them for the Good of their Souls; he better knew what they wanted, and what would do them most Good, than they did themselves: And therefore the next words tell us, that *Jesus went up into a Mountain, and there sate with his Disciples*; where the Multitude following him, he took occasion to discourse to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven: which he the rather did, because *the Passover, a Feast of the Jews, was nigh*, being the fourteenth Day of the first Month *Abib*, Lev. 23. 5. These words are added, not only to shew the Circumstance of Time, when these things were done; but likewise to set forth the Subject-matter of his Discourse to them, which was concerning the spiritual Sense and Use of that Holy Sacrifice, and to lead them from the *Paschal Lamb* to the *Lamb of God*, typify'd by it, that takes away the Sins of the World.

Having finish'd his Discourse with them, he went away (as *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* relate it) into a desert Place belonging to the City of Bethsaida, *Luke* 9. 10. where the Multitude (either from an Admiration of his Person, or an Expectation of receiving Good from him) still follow'd him; for 'tis said, that *when he lifted up his Eyes, he saw a great Company coming unto him*. *St. Luke* tells us, that he receiv'd them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and heal'd them that had need of healing. But when the Day began to wear away, and the Evening was come, the Twelve came to our Saviour, and said unto him, "Send the Multitude away, that they may go into the Country and Towns round about, to lodg and buy themselves Victuals; for we are here in a desert Place, where none is to be had:" But *Jesus* (saith *St. Matthew*) was mov'd with Compassion towards them, because they had come from far, and had nothing to eat; and therefore said unto the Disciples, "They need not to depart, give them to eat;" to let them know, that he will not suffer them to want bodily Food, who seek to him for spiritual. The Disciples reply'd, "That they had not enough to furnish

“out one Meal for such a Multitude, and therefore ask’d;
 “Whether they should go and buy Meat for all this People,
 “which requir’d a great proportion?” St. John here brings
 in our Saviour, upon the hearing of these things, asking Philip,
 one of his Disciples, *Whence shall we buy Bread, that these
 may eat?* And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew
 what he would do. He herein only try’d the Faith of his Dis-
 ciples, to see what Opinion they had of his Divine Power and
 Ability to help them. Philip, in a kind of distrustful manner,
*answered him, that two hundred Penny-worth of Bread was not
 sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little;*
 as if that were a matter of difficulty to him, to whom all
 things are not only possible, but easy.

And this shews that good Men may be sometimes too apt
 to distrust Divine Providence, and almost to despond in great
 Extremities: so we find the Disciples here did, doubting the
 lack of Provisions in the Wilderness, tho Christ was with
 them; and elsewhere in a Storm they were afraid of sinking,
 when Christ was in the Vessel; which made him blame their
 Fear and want of Faith, saying to them, *Why are ye fearful,
 O ye of little Faith?* Now to cure their Infidelity, our Sa-
 viour asks what Provisions they had, saying, *How many Loaves
 have ye?* They say unto him, *Five, and two little Fishes:*
 And here one of his Disciples, Andrew Simon, Peter’s Brother,
*saith unto him, There is a Lad here that hath five Barley Loaves,
 and two small Fishes; but what are they among so many?* Still
 somewhat of Diffidence remains; however, Jesus said unto
 them, *Make the Men sit down, by Fifties,* saith St. Luke; *by
 Hundreds and by Fifties,* saith St. Mark. Now there was
much Grass in the Place, which made it convenient either to
 sit or lie down, as the manner of the Country was; *So the
 Men sate down,* in Ranks or Companies upon the Grass, *in
 number about five Thousand, beside Women and Children,* saith
 St. Matthew, which made the Number much greater. And
 Jesus took the Loaves, and looked up to Heaven, and blessed
 them, saith St. Mark: where, by his looking up, he shews us,
 that all the good things we receive come from above, even
 from the Bounty and Goodness of our heavenly Father; by
 his blessing of the Loaves, he gives us to understand, that ’tis
 the Blessing of God that puts all the nourishing Power and
 Virtue into them: so he elsewhere tells us, that *Man liveth
 not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the
 Mouth of God.* And when he had given Thanks, he distributed
 to the Disciples, and the Disciples to them that were sate down.
 Before

Before he brake or distributed the Bread, he gave God Thanks for it, and implor'd his Blessing upon it, to give us an Example to do likewise, *viz.* to lift up our Hearts to Heaven, and to own that all our Sustainance and Preservation cometh from thence: and then *every Creature of God will be good to us, when we thus receive it with Thanksgiving,* 1 Tim. 4. 4. When he had thus said Grace, or begg'd a Blessing, he distributed first to the Disciples, and then the Disciples distributed to the rest of the Company; which might perhaps give occasion for that Order of our Church in the Communion-Service, to distribute first to the Priests and Deacons then present, and they after to the other Communicants. The Matter here distributed by our Saviour to the Disciples, and by them to the other Guests, were the five Barley Loaves, and two small Fishes, which a Lad happen'd to bring thither; of these he first dealt out the Bread, *and likewise after of the Fishes, as much as they would:* A poor Entertainment (one would think) for so great a Multitude; for five Barley Loaves, among five thousand People, could amount to but one Loaf among a thousand Men; yea, considering the Women and Children, it could not possibly reach to that: and the two little Fishes, divided among so many, could scarce amount to any thing. A very slender Pittance for so great a Number, especially considering, that they were all weary, and almost fainted for Hunger. And yet all the Evangelists, in the next words, tell us, that *they did all eat and were filled:* A little, with God's Blessing, will feed more, and go farther than the greatest unsanctify'd Abundance; *Better is a Dinner of Herbs (saith Solomon) where Love is, than a stalled Ox, and Hatred therewith: Better is a little with the Fear of the Lord, than the greater Treasures and Troubles of the Wicked:* Prov. 15. 16, 17. And elsewhere, *Better is a little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without Right;* Prov. 16. 8. By all which the Wiseman lets us know, that the Blessing of God can make the Poor rich, and they that have but little and very hard Fare, become more fat and well-liking than the most luxurious Epicure. Here a very great Multitude were satisfy'd with little or nothing, as with Marrow and Fatness; and a poor Pittance gave more Satisfaction than the richest Banquet. When God Almighty sees it necessary, he can feed a Prophet by a Raven, and cause him to bring every day Provision enough to supply his Wants: he can make a Widow's Barrel of Meal, tho daily us'd for necessary Occasions, not to waste, and a Cruise of Oil, tho daily consum'd, not to fail; which may teach us at
all

all times to rely upon God's Providence in the use of good Means, without any Diffidence or Distrust; knowing, as Christ himself hath told us, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, and the Righteousness thereof, all these earthly things shall, one way or other, be added unto us. But to go on:

When they were all filled, and abundantly satisfy'd with the Provision afforded to them, Jesus said unto his Disciples, *Gather up the Fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.* This he did to give us an Example of Frugality, and a provident Care in these Matters, that nothing that is left over and above our present Wants should at any time be lost or thrown away. Our Blessed Saviour would have no Want, nor no Waste, and therefore commanded, that the broken Pieces of Bread, and the Remainder of the Fishes, should be preserv'd to help, as their future Necessity might require. They that carelessly waste God's Creatures, and make spoil of the good things bestow'd upon them, commonly live to find the Want of them, and pine away for lack of that which they have vainly consum'd: The loose and the prodigal Person often comes to Poverty; and the Sluggard (as Solomon tells us) is frequently clothed with Rags. And this may teach us to take better care, and make better use of the Blessings of God vouchsafed unto us.

But tho these things, as before related, are all wonderful, yet the main of the Miracle is still to come.

Gather up the Fragments that remain (saith our Saviour to the Disciples) *that nothing be lost.* Why, was it possible that there should be any Fragments remaining of five Loaves and two small Fishes, after above five thousand Persons had been fed and fill'd with them? Was it not much more to be wonder'd at, that these should hold out for the feeding of so great a Number, than that there should be any danger of losing what was left, after they were all satisfy'd?

And yet the next Verse tells us, that so it was; *Therefore they gather'd them together, and filled twelve Baskets with the Fragments of the five Barley Loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.* This was indeed the Wonder of Wonders, that when all they had to eat would not half fill one Basket, there should yet remain enough to fill twelve Baskets; and that after they had all eaten and were fill'd, there should be above twelve times more left, than was at first set before them. Their Provisions, it seems, increas'd by eating; and the more they spent, the more still was left remaining.

This

This was enough to beget Admiration in all that saw or heard of it, and to strike them with Astonishment at that Divine Power, that was alone able to effect it: and so we find it did; for the last words of the Gospel tell us, *Then those Men, when they had seen the Miracles that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet, that should come into the World:* by which we see, that the Evidence of Miracles carries with it the strongest Conviction. Some of these Persons had before heard of his Doctrine and excellent Instructions with little Regard or Success, but his Miracles leave deep and more lasting Impressions; especially this, which they saw and receiv'd the Benefit of, made them all conclude, that this was he that should come as a Prophet to instruct Mankind, as a Priest to save them, and as a King to rule over them. Accordingly the People, upon the sight of this Miracle, came to him, and would make him their King; hoping they might find Deliverance from one that was able to maintain Thousands by Miracle, and to raise and feed an Army without Taxes or Contribution. But when Jesus perceived that the People would come and take him by force to make him a King, he departed again into a Mountain alone; i. e. he retir'd to his Privacy and Prayer, to avoid an Advancement. When he saw them again, he check'd their Worldly-mindedness, saying unto them, *Verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the Miracle, but because ye did eat of the Loaves and were filled;* ver. 26. Because he found their Appetite too eagerly set upon earthly and bodily Food, he seeks to take it off, and to raise it to more spiritual and heavenly Provisions; saying in the next Verse, *Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed:* adding, that he was that Bread of Life that came down from Heaven, and can alone satisfy the Wants and Cravings of the Soul; for he that cometh to me (saith he) shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall never thirst.

This is briefly the Sum of that Discourse which this great Prophet deliver'd upon the Miracle of the Loaves; which will be more largely consider'd on the last Sunday after Trinity, when this same Gospel is again appointed for that Day. In the mean time let us see what Use and Improvement we are to make of it at present. And,

1st, From Christ's going about from place to place, doing good to the Bodies and Souls of Men, we may learn, according

ing to our several Abilities and Capacities, to do the same: This is St. Paul's Advice, *As we have Opportunity to do Good to all Men*; Gal. 6. 10. We cannot indeed do Miracles as Christ did; we cannot raise the Dead, or heal all manner of Diseases; we are not able to give Eyes to the Blind, or Feet to the Lame, or do any such wonderful Works, which are not requir'd or expected of us: but there are other things that lie within the Reach and Verge of our Power; we can feed the Hungry, clothe the Naked, relieve the Oppressed, instruct the Ignorant, comfort the Feeble-minded, and the like: these things are in our power, and we are commanded to the utmost of our Abilities to do them. The Precept and Example of our Saviour should most powerfully excite us to the Practice of them; for he made doing Good his ordinary and daily Employment; 'twas the end likewise of his extraordinary and miraculous Works, and was indeed the Sum and Substance of all his Religion: so that if we would approve ourselves to be his Followers, we must go and learn to the utmost of our power to do likewise: hereby we shall become most like unto God, and best imitate his Divine Goodness, which is the highest and noblest Perfection we can possibly arrive to. Herein also we shall find no small Pleasure and Satisfaction; a Pleasure that will be permanent and lasting; a Pleasure that will stand by us in the most needful Times, even *the Hour of Death, and the Day of Judgment*: in a word, it will bring Peace and Comfort to our Souls here, and crown us with an everlasting Reward hereafter.

2dly, From Christ's encouraging all that follow'd him, and helping them out in all the Straits they met with in their Attendance upon him, we may learn to call and invite all Men to come unto him; he is ever ready to receive them in the Arms of his Mercy, and to relieve them in all their Wants, both corporeal and spiritual: *Come unto me* (saith he) *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest*; Mat. 11. 30. There is no Rest to be found any where else, but under his Care and Providence; and therefore we read, that when the Disciples, under some Trouble, were thinking of leaving of him, he said unto them, *Will ye also go away?* they presently reply'd, *Lord whither shall we go? thou only hast the Words of eternal Life.* There is no place of Safety but under the Shadow of his Wings; and we can find no Rest to our Souls, or Health to our Bodies, but what he is pleas'd to administer to both; which is sufficient to lead or draw us to him.

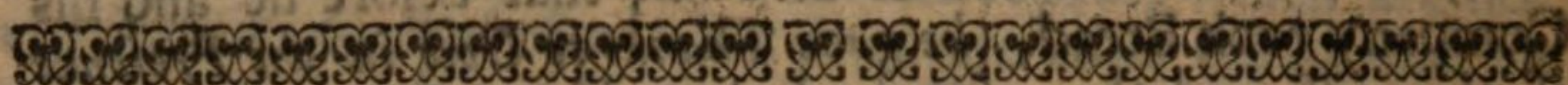
3dly, From

3dly, From Christ's looking up and blessing the Provisions before he gave them to the Disciples or the Multitude, we may learn not to omit the craving of a Blessing, and giving of Thanks in the Use of God's Creatures. This, we see, was our Saviour's Practice, as 'tis here related by the Four Evangelists; and this likewise was the Practice of the Apostles, as we find related of St. Paul, that before he and his Company took Bread, *he gave Thanks to God in the Presence of them all, and then after brake it and began to eat; Acts 27. 35.* which pious Practice is deriv'd down thro all succeeding Ages, even to us. *Every Creature (saith the Apostle) is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer, 1 Tim. 4. 5.* where, by the Word of God, we are not to understand the written Word, but the Word of his Power and Providence, whereby he ordereth and commandeth the Creatures to afford such Service and Comfort in their several kinds as he thinks fit; which, sanctifying the Creatures, enables them to do their Office, and us to receive the Benefit and Comfort of them. As Bread is the Staff of Life, so the Blessing of God is the Staff of that Staff; without it Bread could no more nourish us than a Stone, nor Fish than a Serpent; and with it a small matter will suffice to all the Ends of Nature: which should teach us to invoke it by daily and diligent Prayer.

4thly, From God's blessing those small Provisions, to the satisfying of so many Thousands, and at last multiplying the Fragments into more than was first set before them, we may learn to put our Trust in God at all times, and to depend upon his Care and Providence in our greatest Necessities. We cannot doubt either his Ability or Readiness to help us, from the Instance of this Day: and what reason can we have to distrust him, after so many Experiments? We may not indeed always expect Dainties or Varieties, for that may be more pernicious than profitable for us; but if we use our Endeavours, and trust in God, we shall not want a Competence. *The Lions may lack and suffer Hunger (saith the Psalmist) but they that fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good: And we may safely rely in all Conditions upon the Word of him, who is both Truth and Goodness it self.*

Lastly, From our Saviour's taking occasion from this earthly Food to mind his Disciples of more heavenly Provisions, we may learn to elevate our Minds above all things here below to the things above. So his Apostles likewise frequently instruct us, to set our Affections not on the things on the Earth, but on the things in Heaven; and for very good reason

son too, because the things of the Earth are all temporal and perishing, but the things in Heaven are spiritual, and lasting to all Eternity; which, if we follow, we shall secure a sufficient Portion here, and everlasting Treasure hereafter: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LI.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday in *Lent*.

Hebrews ix. 11—16.

Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with Hands; that is to say, not of this Building: Neither by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood he enter'd in once into the Holy Place, having obtain'd eternal Redemption for us, &c.

THE Collect for this Day beseeches Almighty God mercifully to look upon his People, that by his great Goodness they may be govern'd and preserv'd evermore both in Body and Soul, thro Jesus Christ our Lord; that is, by his Merits and Mediation: For the better understanding whereof,

The Epistle for the Day shews us the Greatness of Christ's Priesthood, above that under the Law; and the transcendent Excellence and Efficacy of his Sacrifice, above all the legal Sacrifices; as will appear by the following Discourse. The beginning of the Epistle acquaints us,

1st, That *Christ became an High Priest*: The Office of a Priest under the Law was to offer Sacrifice, and pray for the People; the Office of the High Priest was to enter once a Year into the Holy of Holies, with the Blood of the Atonement, and there to bless and make Intercession for them: which Offices Christ perform'd to the full in the behalf of his People; for he gave himself as a living, holy and accep-
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table Sacrifice, blessing, praying and interceding for them: call'd therefore a Priest for ever after the Order of *Melchisedeck*, who was King and Priest together, with a Priesthood never to cease, or to be succeeded into by any. Again,

2dly, Christ is said to become an High Priest of good things to come; that is, either of good things to come after the Law, of which the Sacrifices and Ceremonies were but a Shadow; or else of good things to come after this Life, to wit, a Reward of eternal Glory and Happiness; of which the Law gave none, or but obscure notice.

3dly, He is an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with Hands; that is to say, not of this Building: by which is meant the Tabernacle of his Body; for St. John tells us, *The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us*; in the Original it is *ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐν ἡμῖν*, he took up his Tabernacle among us, John I. 14. meaning, that he took a Body like ours, and dwelt among us, according to that of the Psalmist, *A Body hast thou prepared for me*. This he calls a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, being far more honourable than that under the Law; the Tabernacle of his Body being not made with Hands, as that under the Law was, but form'd in an extraordinary manner by the Holy Ghost in a Virgin's Womb; and so was not a Building like the Old Tabernacle of Wood and Stone, nor yet like other human Bodies by common and natural Generation; but of a more Divine and Spiritual Frame, by an unusual and miraculous Operation of God's Holy Spirit, which gave a more than ordinary Excellency to it above any other Tabernacle or Building; call'd therefore the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not Man, Heb. 8. 2.

Neither did Christ's Sacrifice, by which he procur'd these good things to come, consist of the Blood of Goats and Calves, as the Legal Sacrifices did, but of his own most precious and immaculate Blood; by which he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtain'd eternal Redemption for us. After he had enter'd upon his Priesthood, he, instead of the Holy of Holies into which the High Priest under the Law was wont to enter, ascended into Heaven, which was prefigur'd by it, and is the Holy Place in which he is here said to enter: And this he did once for all, instead of the High Priest's entring once a year into the Holy Place, that represented it; for Christ, by one Sacrifice of himself, perfected all them that believe, and so there was no need of reiterat-
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ing that perfect Sacrifice, as they did the Legal Sacrifices for their Imperfection.

Again, he is said to enter into this Holy Place once for all, *with his own Blood*. The High Priest enter'd once a year with the Blood of Goats and Calves, which were offer'd on the Days of Expiation; as we read, *Lev. 16. 5.* But Christ went into Heaven with the Sacrifice of himself, which was sufficient to make Atonement for the Sins of the World: And by that he *hath obtain'd eternal Redemption for us*; having rescu'd us from the Power of Sin and Satan, and freed us from the Bondage we were in to our ghostly Enemy.

This the Author of this Epistle proves in the next Verse, by the Energy and good Effect of far inferior Sacrifices; and from thence argues the much greater Efficacy of this High and Holy Sacrifice, and the far nobler Benefits and Privileges which we receive thereby: *For if (saith he) the Blood of Bulls and of Goats, and the Ashes of a Heifer sprinkling the Unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the Flesh, &c.* where 'tis suppos'd, that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats had a cleansing Power to the purifying the Unclean, not indeed of themselves; for the Apostle elsewhere tells us, that *'tis impossible for the Blood of Bulls and Goats to take away Sin*: but by the Power of God's Word commanding them to that end, and by virtue of Christ's Blood, which they were appointed to typify and represent. The Blood of a Bullock and a Goat were requir'd under the Law for a Sin-offering, and the Ashes of a burnt Heifer were to be sprinkled on an unclean Person, for the Purification of the Flesh; as we read *Numb. 19. & Lev. 16.*

And if these inferior things, that had no Value or Virtue in them of their own, were ordain'd and commanded for these Purposes; *How much more (saith the Apostle) shall the Blood of Christ, who thro the eternal Spirit offer'd himself without Spot unto God, purge your Conscience from dead Works to serve the living God?* that is, how much more shall the invaluable Blood of our Saviour, who made a free Oblation of himself as a Lamb without Spot, purge us from the Guilt of Sin, and purify us for God's Service? From whence he infers, in the next words, that *for this Cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament*; which being the principal thing intended in this Epistle, must be more fully spoken to.

To which end we must know, that a Mediator, in the general Notion of it, is one that comes between two Parties, to make up some Breach or Difference between them. Thus we know,

know, if any Controversy arise between two or more Persons, he that interposes for the reconciling and adjusting Matters between them, is call'd a Mediator. And this may be undertaken either voluntarily, without any Application made to him; as when any one, out of mere Good will and Desire of Peace, endeavours to serve and reconcile two differing Parties, without their referring Matters to him; in which case he can only persuade, but cannot enforce his Counsel upon them: or else it may be done with the Consent and Authority of both Parties; as when they both agree to refer their Matters to any Person, to be decided and determin'd by him; in which case he may not only persuade, but command their Obedience: for having authoriz'd him to act in their stead, by referring themselves to him, whatsoever he doth in the Matters committed to him, is in effect the Act of both Parties; who having both submitted their Wills to his, and mutually empower'd him to act for them, they are as effectually concluded and determin'd by what he doth, as they are by their own Act and Deed.

But beside a Mediator by Consent, there is likewise a Mediator by Office; as when one is deputed by a Magistrate, who hath the Power over both, to hear and determine any Matter in Dispute or Controversy between them: such a one, tho no Referee or Mediator by Consent, is yet so by Commission or Office, having receiv'd Power from one, who hath the Command of both; and such a one may not only entreat, but enforce both to obey his Decision. This is briefly the Nature and Office of a Mediator.

But how came Christ to be our Mediator? for we read, *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. 2. 5. Why, this came to pass, partly by Christ's voluntary undertaking this Office; and partly by God the Father's Designation, and appointing him to it. For the

1st, Christ Jesus was pleas'd, without any Application or Assent of ours, freely to undertake this Office for us; for tho all Mankind had offended God by the first Transgression, and thereby incur'd all the direful Effects of his Displeasure, yet were they utterly unable to recover or help themselves out of this Misery. Now in this forlorn Estate, the Son of God, out of mere Pity and Good-will to us, voluntarily interpos'd, and became our Advocate and Mediator; which is in Scripture said to be without any Desire or Desert of ours, and is every where ascrib'd to the free Grace and Goodness

of our Redeemer : so that as the Offerings under the Law were to be free and of their own accord ; so this of our Saviour's under the Gospel was infinitely free and voluntary. And yet he is said,

2dly, To be design'd and appointed by God the Father to this Office of Mediator ; both which may agree well enough together : for in the eternal Purpose and Decree of Heaven for the Recovery of lost Man, the Son of God freely offer'd himself as a Surety or Mediator for them, and God the Father as willingly accepted of, and authoriz'd him to it. Of this Covenant on God the Father's part, we read *Isa. 53. 10. If he shall make his Soul an Offering for Sin, he shall see his Seed, and prolong his Days.* Of the Son's Acceptance and Undertaking hereof, we read *Psal. 40. 7, 8. Then said I, Lo ! I come ; in the Volume of thy Book it is written of me, I come to do thy Will, O God.* Upon which Agreement he in time enter'd upon, and perform'd for us the Work of a Mediator, being therefore stil'd the Messiah, the Christ, and the Anointed of God to this purpose : all which are included in the Name here given him, of the Mediator of the New Testament ; so call'd, to distinguish him from *Moses*, the Mediator of the Old Testament : of whom we read, *Gal. 3. 19.* where 'tis said, that *the Law was ordain'd by Angels in the Hand of a Mediator ;* that is, it was deliver'd to the *Israelites* by the Hand of *Moses*, who was appointed to mediate between God and his People : for a Mediator is not a Mediator of one, but more. And as *Moses* was the Mediator under the Old Testament, to stand between God and his People in the *Jewish Covenant* ; so is Christ the Mediator under the New, to act for and between both in the *Christian Covenant* : for which reason he is stil'd, *The Mediator of the New Covenant* ; *Heb. 12. 24.* And because this New Covenant is establish'd upon better Promises, having Privileges of a higher Nature, of a larger Extent, and more lasting Duration, he is said to be *the Mediator of a better Covenant* ; *Heb. 8. 6.*

But how did Christ execute this Office of a Mediator ? Why that, the next words tell us, was by the means of Death, for the Redemption of the Transgressions that were under the first Testament ; *Death was the Wages of Sin ; and without shedding of Blood there is no Remission.* Accordingly by transgressing the first Covenant, we all lay under the Sentence of Death ; and he that would procure our Pardon, and make our Peace, must undergo the Punishment in our stead that was due

due to our Sins. Now this Christ, as our Mediator, undertook and did for us; for he laid down his Life to satisfy Divine Justice in our behalf, and thereby made an Atonement for the Sins of Mankind, because the Blood of Bulls and of Goats had not Value or Virtue enough for this Expiation. Christ spar'd not his own Blood, but willingly shed it for our Redemption. By this means he hath transacted and concluded our Peace for us, and restor'd us again to that Love and Favour of God, which, by the Transgressions that were under the First Testament, we had utterly lost and forfeited. *He hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law* (saith the Apostle) *being made a Curse for us; and hath given himself a Ransom for all,* 1 Tim. 2. 6. By which 'tis evident, that our Mediator, by one Oblation and Sacrifice of himself, hath made a full, perfect and all-sufficient Atonement and Satisfaction for the Sins of the World; and so hath obtain'd a New Covenant for us, ratify'd and seal'd with his own Blood, whereby we are redeem'd from the Guilt of those Transgressions, which could not be expiated under the Old Covenant. And this gives him the Title of the Mediator of the New Testament; which he farther executes by being our Advocate, and interceding for us: for as he satisfy'd for our Sins, by the Merit of his Sacrifice, so is he still pleading of it with his Father for our Pardon. So St. John tells us, *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World:* 1 John 2. 1, 2. He is enter'd into the Holy Place, not made with Hands, but into Heaven it self, *there to appear in the Presence of God for us;* Heb. 9. 24. So that now he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them; Heb. 7. 25. If at any time, thro the Weakness of our Nature, or the Strength and Importunity of Temptation, we are drawn aside into the Commission of any Sin, we have one at God's right Hand ever ready to plead our Cause, and sue out a Pardon for us. But have all Sinners the Benefit of Christ's Atonement and Intercession? No, his Atonement is indeed sufficient for all, and is offer'd to all; for *he gave himself a Ransom for all:* his Blood hath Merit and Virtue enough to become a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World: but yet 'tis effectual only to a few, not for want of Worth in the Sacrifice, or of Efficacy in the Intercession; but for want of due Qualifications in the Persons, to whom both are tender'd: for the New Covenant, purchas'd

by Christ's Blood, is not absolute, but conditional; the Benefit of it is suspended upon the Terms of Faith and Repentance: They who observe these Conditions, by believing in Christ, and turning from their Sins, are within the Verge of the Covenant, and partake of all the Privileges and Advantages of it; but they who persist in Impenitence and Infidelity, are Strangers to this Covenant of Promise, and are excluded from all the Grace and Favour of it.

But what is the End of Christ's Mediatorship? Why, that the last words of the Epistle for the Day will inform us; *viz.* that *they which are called may receive the Promise of eternal Inheritance*: that is, that the effectually call'd, or penitent Christians, may have Heaven and Happiness made over to them by way of Inheritance, having the first Fruits of it here, and the full and actual Possession of it hereafter, as Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate.

This is the Sum of this Day's Epistle; in which we have the great Worth and Dignity of Christ's Sacrifice, together with the Nature, Manner and Benefit of his Mediation. From whence we are instructed in several good and useful Lessons: As,

1st, We learn hence the Imperfection of all the Legal Rites and Sacrifices, compar'd with the Excellency and Efficacy of Christ's Sacrifice: *The Law* (saith the Apostle) *was only a Schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ*; it consisted only of weak and beggarly Elements, that kept Mankind in a lower Form, wherein, like Children in their Minority, they could hardly spell out the Sense and Meaning of them, being an imperfect Rule, suited to an imperfect State: their Offerings, Sacrifices and Expiations had no Virtue in them to do away Sin, but only as they shadow'd out, and related to the great propitiatory Sacrifice under the Gospel, of which they had little or no knowledg. But Christ hath now unriddled all those Types and Shadows, and set Christians in a higher Form by more spiritual and manly Institutions; his offering up himself put all the Value and Virtue into them, and by that he hath sanctify'd and sav'd all that believe in him.

2dly, We learn hence the sad Condition that all Mankind were in under the Old Covenant, and the happy State whereinto they are translated by the New. The Law pronounc'd a Curse on all that kept not up to the Rigour of it; for 'tis written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that*

that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them. And since no mere Man ever came up to the Perfection of the Law, but that in many things we offend all, it follows that they were all under the heavy Sentence and Malediction of that Covenant; in which forlorn and undone Condition they were altogether unable to help or relieve themselves: but now Christ, by interposing as a Mediator, hath deliver'd us from this Sentence, and, by his Atonement and Intercession, hath obtain'd a new and better Covenant for us; wherein Allowance is made for Infirmities, and sincere Desires and Endeavours of pleasing God are accepted for perfect Obedience: by which he hath infinitely better'd our Condition, and given us the greatest reason to praise and adore him.

3dly, We learn hence the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God, in finding out this Way and Method for our Salvation, which we could never have found out for our selves; for hereby his Justice is satisfy'd, and we are reliev'd by the Merits and Mercy of his Son: by this he hath made our Peace, and *we that were afar off, are now brought nigh by the Blood of his Cross.* The Enmity that was between God and us is now remov'd, and a firm League of Amity and Friendship is made and settled between us; by which means *Mercy and Truth are met together, and Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.*

4thly, From Christ's being the Mediator of the New Testament, let us learn to address to him as such, and cast our selves upon his Mediation; for he hath made an all-sufficient Atonement, and obtain'd eternal Redemption for us: so that *whatever we ask the Father in his Name, he will give it us;* for he hath merited for us the Grant of our Petitions: the Incense of his Merits and Intercession perfume our Prayers, and render them an Offering of a sweet-smelling Savour. Hence we find the Psalmist praying, that *his Prayers might ascend as Incense, and the lifting his Hands as a Morning Sacrifice;* Psal. 141. 2. Accordingly our Church teaches us to conclude all our Prayers with the Merits and Mediation of Christ, which alone can give them all their Acceptance; and for that reason (saith the Apostle) *Christ is enter'd into the Holy Place not made with Hands, that is, into Heaven it self, there to appear in the Presence of God for us:* Heb. 9. 24.

5thly, We learn hence not to set up any other Mediators than God hath appointed, nor unwarrantably join any Co-partners with him; for there is but one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus: and therefore let us

not join the Virgin *Mary*, or any other Saint or Angel with him. The High Priest enter'd alone into the Holy of Holies, with the Blood of the Sacrifice, to atone for them that were without the Veil, thereby typifying our Saviour's going into Heaven, to be our sole Mediator: and we justly forfeit all the Benefit of his Mediation, if we have recourse to any other; for his Merits alone are sufficient, and need none to be join'd with him. This Way we may have free Access, and come with Boldness to the Throne of Grace; but we affront God, and disparage our Mediator, if we go to him any other Way. And therefore,

Lastly, To obtain the Benefit of Christ's Mediation, let us learn to fulfil the Conditions of the New Covenant, of which he is Mediator; that is, let us repent and believe the Gospel, without which all that he hath done or said for us will be of no avail: for God cannot be at peace with us, till we lay down our Arms, and submit to him. If we regard Iniquity in our Hearts, he will not hear our Prayers; neither will any Intercession prevail, while we retain our Sin. Let us then do our part, by repenting and turning from our evil Ways; and then God will not be wanting on his part to give Grace here, and Glory hereafter.



DIS-



DISCOURSE LII.

The G O S P E L for the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

St. John viii. 46, to the end.

Jesus said, Which of you convinceth me of Sin? And if I say the Truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's Words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answer'd the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a Devil, &c.

THE Subject of this Gospel is Christ's Reasoning with the *Jews* about the Truth of his Mission and Messiahship; wherein he shews by sundry Arguments, that he was the Person promised and sent by God for the Redemption of Mankind, and likewise answers all their Cavils and Objections to the contrary.

It begins with a Question, that upbraids their Calumnies, and wills them to say their worst against him: *Jesus said, Which of you convinces me of Sin?* The occasion of which Question was from the rude and obstinate Infidelity of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, as appears by the foregoing part of the Chapter; where we read how they sought all manner of occasion against him, and put the most perverse Constructions upon all that he said or did. And this made him ask the Question, *Which of you convinceth me of Sin?* which is as if he had said, "I know some of you charge me as an Impostor
" and Blasphemer, because I say I came from God; others,
" that my Record is not true, and so would make me a Lyar:
" but which of you can prove or maintain your Charge? yea,
" who is there among you that can convict me of the least
" Fault or Falshood? or that I have either forg'd my Com-
" mission, or abuse my Office?"

And if I say the Truth, why do ye not believe me? " If I
" do not in any manner impose upon you, but faithfully tell
" you

“ you the Truth, as I am commanded and commission’d by
 “ my Father; why do you wilfully resist the Truth, and op-
 “ pose both me and my Father? But the truth is, as I be-
 “ fore told you, *ver. 44.* ye are of your Father the Devil,
 “ who was a Lyar and Slanderer from the Beginning, and
 “ the Father of them; his Sons ye plainly are, and his
 “ Works ye do.”

For he that is of God, heareth God’s Words: “ If you were
 “ the genuine Sons and Servants of God, you would receive
 “ his Testimony, and believe the Scriptures, which testify of
 “ me, and bear witness that God hath sent me; but ye there-
 “ fore hear them not, because ye are not of God. ’Tis a mani-
 “ nifest sign that you belong not to him, by turning the deaf
 “ Ear to what he hath spoken, and rejecting the Message that
 “ he hath sent you, which God’s Children and Servants are
 “ never wont to do.” And so, tho they could not convince
 him of Sin, *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his*
Mouth, yet he abundantly convinc’d them of Folly in gain-
 saying the Truth, and refusing their own Salvation.

But what Reply did the *Jews* make to this Discourse of our
 Saviour? Why, when they had nothing else to say, they
 return’d him only abusive and reproachful Language; for
they answered and said unto him, Say we not well, that thou art
a Samaritan, and hast a Devil? The Name of a Samaritan
 was in those days a Term of great Reproach, for it signify’d
 with them an Apostate or Revolter from the *Jewish* Religion,
 which render’d him odious and hateful to the *Jews*; insomuch
 that (as *St. John* tells us) the *Jews* had no Dealings or Cor-
 respondence with the Samaritans, *John 4. 9.* So that the cal-
 ling our Saviour a Samaritan, was the fixing upon him one of
 the most odious Titles or Characters they could give him: to
 which they added the only one that was worse, *Thou art a*
Samaritan, and hast a Devil; meaning, that he was a Mad-
 man, or beside himself, one acted by a Spirit of Rage and
 Phrenzy; for so ’tis explain’d *John 10. 20.* *He hath a Devil,*
and is mad: where the latter Word is added to explain the
 former.

But what Return did our Saviour make to this reviling
 Language? Why, *When he was reviled* (saith the Apostle)
he reviled not again, but referred himself to him that judgeth
righteously. The Return he made was mild and gentle; for
Jesus answered, I have not a Devil, but I honour my Father,
and ye dishonour me: that is, “ I do no evil or extravagant
 “ thing, by which you might think me acted by an evil Spi-
 “ rit;”

“rit; yea, so far from it, that I do the most noble and honourable Work in the World: for *I honour my Father*, by doing the Work that he hath given me to do, and in all my Words and Actions endeavour to illustrate and advance his Glory; which is not the Work of a Madman, or one possess’d with a Devil: and therefore *you dishonour me*, and likewise him that sent me, by such unjust Censures and false Imputations.” To persuade them whereof, he adds, that he had no selfish Ends, or ambitious Designs in any thing that he did: “For *I seek not* (saith he) *my own Glory*; if I did, I could easily display it before you in such Works, as should even dazzle your Eyes, and make you stand amaz’d at the Splendor and Glory of them; but I have no such worldly and ambitious Aims: ’tis entirely the Glory of my Father that I drive at, and to do the Work of him that sent me. But tho I seek not mine own Glory (saith he) yet *there is one that seeketh and judgeth*; that is, my Father narrowly observes whether I am honour’d or dishonour’d by you, and will judg and deal with you accordingly; for of the Prophet that was foretold and promised should come, ’tis said, that *whosoever will not hearken to the Words that he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him*, Deut. 18. 19. If you understood things aright, you would take me for that Prophet, and hearken to my Sayings, to avoid the Danger of reproaching and rejecting of me.”

This Reply of our Saviour carry’d to much Strength of Reason and Goodness in it, that many were convinc’d and converted by it; for some said, *These are not the Words of one that hath a Devil*, John 10. 21. Besides, his Works plainly shew him to come from God; for *can the Devil* (say they) *open the Eyes of the Blind*? And to say he doth this by the Power of the Devil, is very absurd; for ’tis to make the Devil act against himself, to the dividing and destroying of his own Kingdom.

After this, the better to encourage them to receive his Message, he adds, *Verily, verily I say unto you, If a Man keep my Saying, he shall never see Death*. But here the malicious Jews, instead of being convinc’d and encourag’d to their Duty, began again to cavil and carp at his Words, and to seek out farther occasion against him: for they presently reply’d upon him, *Now we know that thou hast a Devil; Abraham is dead, and the Prophets; and thou sayest, If a Man keep my Saying, he shall not taste of Death: Art thou greater than our Father Abraham,*

braham, who is dead? and the Prophets are dead, whom makest thou thy self? This was a very popular and plausible Objection, for the People had *Abraham* and the Prophets in very high Esteem and Veneration, and were ever ready to pull down any that should lift himself above them: they look'd upon *Abraham* as the Father and Founder of their Faith, and the Prophets as so many Messengers sent from God, to deliver his Mind to them; and as none were ever favour'd by God like them, so they thought it a high Presumption for any to exalt himself above them. Now when *Abraham* and the Prophets were not freed from dying, but all felt and fell by that fatal Stroke, they could not with any patience hear one assuming a Power to himself of bestowing Privileges on others, to which none of the Patriarchs, Prophets, or any of the greatest Favourites of Heaven ever attain'd. From hence they concluded for certain, that he was acted by a diabolical Power; for they said, "Now we know that thou hast a Devil, or art one possess'd with an evil Spirit of Pride, in taking to thy self greater Honours than were ever confer'd on *Abraham* and the Prophets."

But what Reply did our Saviour make to all this? Why, *Jesus answered, If I honour my self, my Honour is nothing; it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say, That he is your God: that is,* "If I go about to procure Honour to my self, it would be only a piece of Ambition and Vain-glory, and all such Honour is nothing worth. All the Honour I have, or desire to have, is from my Father, who foretold of me by *Abraham* and the Prophets, proclaim'd me by a Voice from Heaven, and confirm'd my Mission by the Seal of Miracles; he it is that honoureth me, whom you acknowledge to be greater than *Abraham*, even the God of *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*, whom you own as your God in Covenant with you. And yet, notwithstanding all your Pretences and Protestations, ye have not yet truly known him; you know him not as my Father, nor worship him as your God; but are in a great measure ignorant of both: But I know him (saith Christ) for I came and receiv'd my Message and Commission from him; my Errand is to reveal him to you, and therefore I must know him more perfectly: and should I say otherwise, that I know him not, or be drawn by your Reproaches to deny and conceal my Knowledge of him, I should be a Lyar like unto you, i. e. I should betray my Trust, and prove as false and perfidious as you; which I may not, and cannot do, for I know him, and keep his

Saying,

“ *Saying.* I must tell you again, that I have such a full and
“ perfect Knowledg of his Will, that I will not cease from
“ keeping to it my self, and from persuading you to ob-
“ serve it.

“ But because you talk so much of your Father *Abraham*,
“ and boast of the many Privileges you derive from him, as
“ being of his Seed, I must here tell you, that *your Father*
“ *Abraham rejoiced to see my Day, and he saw it, and was*
“ *glad.*” And this being one of the principal Arguments for
convincing the *Jews* and other Infidels of Christ’s being the
true promised Messias and Saviour of the World, it will be
requisite to insist a little larger upon it.

There was a Promise made to *Abraham*, that *in his Seed all*
the Families of the Earth should be blessed, Gen. 12. 3. which
Promise was repeated again, Chap. 18. 18. Now *Abraham* be-
ing stedfast in Faith, and not staggering thro Unbelief, firm-
ly believ’d and adher’d to this Promise; which Faith is by
the Apostle describ’d to be *the Substance of things hoped for,*
and the Evidence of things not seen; Heb. 11. 1. Upon the
Strength of this Faith, *Abraham* saw my Day (saith our Sa-
viour) looking and longing for it, and with great Exiliency
and Exultation of Mind rejoic’d at it. Where we may ob-
serve,

1st, That Christ had a Day, which he properly call’d his
own; *My Day*, saith he. And when was that? Why, it was
his Birth-day, or the time of his coming into the World; call’d
sometimes the Day of Grace, sometimes the Day of Salvation,
because the Sun of Righteousness then rose upon the benighted
World with healing in his Wings; which was the dawning of
the Gospel, and the beginning of that happy State: ’twas the
Day when the Son of God *was made Flesh, and dwelt among*
us; and *Men beheld his Glory, as the Glory of the only-begotten*
of the Father, full of Grace and Truth; John 1. 14. This was
his Day, viz. the Day of his Nativity or Incarnation. This
Day we read,

2^{dly}, That *Abraham* saw, tho he liv’d some Thousands of
Years before it came to pass: But how then did he see it?
Why, not with his bodily Eyes, which were clos’d and shut
up in the Grave long before; but he saw it by the Eye of
Faith, for he believ’d in God, and it was accounted to him
for Righteousness: he saw this Day in the Promise, tho he
died long before the Performance; he saw it in the first Pro-
mise made in Paradise, of *the Seed of the Woman’s bruising*
the Serpent’s Head; he saw it in the Promise made to him,
of

of all Nations being blessed in his Seed; he saw it in the Glass of Prophecy, tho somewhat darkly. And yet 'tis said,

3dly, That he rejoic'd at the sight of it: *Abraham saw my Day, and rejoiced*; the word in the Original is *ἠσάλλισαυτο*, which signifies dancing and leaping for Joy. And yet that is not all: for 'tis added and repeated again, *He saw it and was glad*: *Gavisus est gaudio magna*; He beheld it afar off, and yet was glad at it with exceeding great Joy. The Day of Christ then is a Day of Joy: So it was with *Abraham*, who from a remote view of it rejoiced greatly; and so would you (saith our Saviour, *ver. 33, 39, 53.*) if you were the genuine Sons of *Abraham*. A Reverend Father upon these words, brings in Christ reasoning with and upbraiding the *Jews* for their Unbelief after this manner:

Pater Noster Abraham, &c. "Our Father *Abraham* (saith he) is still in your Mouths, and your frequent Boast is, we are *Abraham's* Seed; but if you were indeed his Children, you would *patrize*, do as he did, and tread in the steps of his Faith; you would desire what he desir'd, and joy in what he rejoiced at. Now my Day (saith Christ) was so highly esteem'd by *Abraham*, that he was glad at the least Glimpse of it, and leap'd for Joy at a very imperfect sight of it: and you that would so fain father your selves upon him, are so far from that, that what he desir'd absent, you despise present; what he would have been the better to see, you are the worse for seeing it. And how then are these *Abraham's* Children, that have nothing of *Abraham* in them? *Ye seek to kill me*, (saith he, *ver. 40.*) that did not *Abraham*; if you were truly the Seed of *Abraham*, you would do the Works of *Abraham*; whereas you do what he did not, and do not what he did: he rejoic'd at my Day, and was glad to hear the least Tidings of me; but you condemn my Person and despise my Day, and how can such as you be the Sons of *Abraham*?" Doubtless the Father of the Faithful will disown such faithless Sons; *Abraham* will be ignorant of you, and *Israel* will know you not; *Isa. 63. 16.* But what said the *Jews* to this? Why, still in the cavilling Vein; for when Christ told them of *Abraham's* Joy at the sight of him, they said unto him, *Thou art not yet fifty Years old; and hast thou seen Abraham?* meaning, that his Age was able to confute his saying, and convince him of Falshood; for since *Abraham* liv'd and died above two thousand Years before he was born, how was it possible either

either that he should see *Abraham*, or *Abraham* should see him? To this he reply'd, *Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am*; that is, you are much out in computing of my Age. For,

1. "I have a Being from all Eternity, by which I am co-equal and co-eternal with my Father, and so had a real Being and Existence before *Abraham* had any." Hence he speaks of the *Glory he had with his Father, before the World began*; "and consequently I being long before *Abraham* was born, might well enough see and know him." Moreover,

2. "As to my Being or Appearance here on Earth in a human Body, that indeed was not much above thirty Years ago; but yet this coming of mine in the Flesh, was decreed by my Father long before *Abraham's* time, and was in kindness reveal'd to *Abraham*, from whom the promis'd Seed should come. And this being made known to him while he liv'd, he might in that respect know me also: not that he saw me with his bodily Eyes in that human Shape, in which I now appear, but that he saw me by the Light of Faith; being told of God of my coming in the Fulness of Time, to be born of a Woman, for the Redemption of Mankind."

The *Jews*, upon the hearing of this, were extremely incens'd against him, taking him for a Blasphemer, and so began to take up Stones to cast at him; which was the Punishment appointed in the Law for Blasphemy. But *Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple*. He first conceal'd, and then convey'd himself away, to avoid their Cruelty; leaving the Temple, where 'tis probable this Conference was held.

This is the Substance of this Day's Gospel, which will afford us many pious and heavenly Meditations. As,

1. From Christ's challenging his Enemies, to convince him of Sin, we may learn to assert and clear our Innocence from the Calumnies of wicked Men, and to wipe off the Dirt they cast upon it; so our Saviour did upon all great and weighty Occasions. Indeed, slight and trifling Reproaches are better despis'd than debated; they die away by Contempt, but are kept alive by Resentment. But in all great and scandalous Imputations, that may wound our Persons or Professions, we are, by Christ's Example, to assert and vindicate our Integrity.

2. From

2. From the Test that Christ here gives, *He that is of God, heareth God's Words*; we may learn, not only to hear and submit to God's Word our selves, but to suspect all Persons and Doctrines that cannot, or will not bear that Touchstone: *To the Law and to the Testimony* (saith the Prophet *Isaiah*) *and if they speak not according to these, 'tis because they have no truth in them.* And ye therefore hear them not, (saith our Saviour) *because ye are not of God.*

3. From the *Pharisees* charging our Saviour here with having a Devil, we learn, that obstinate Unbelievers will rather have recourse to the grossest Lyes and Impostures, than acknowledg and receive the Truth. Tho Christ's Doctrine and Miracles were directly opposite to the Interest and Designs of the Devil, and apparently tended to the Overthrow of his Kingdom; yet these inveterate Enemies of Christianity would rather ascribe both to a Diabolical Spirit, than to the Holy Spirit of God, from whom alone they came.

4. From Christ's declaring that he honour'd his Father, and sought not his own Glory, but the Glory of God; we may learn to prefer the Honour of God before any worldly Interest or Vain-glory whatever: The Glory of God is the great End of our Lives, and the main Ingredient of our Happiness, and therefore is to be pursu'd before and above all secular Honours and Advantages, which quickly fade and come to an end.

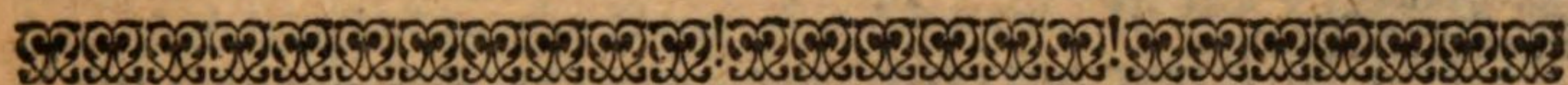
5. From *Abraham's* seeing of Christ's Day, and rejoicing at it at so great a distance; we may learn to double our Joy, and to rejoice much more at a nearer View of him. He saw him only through a Glass darkly, but we Face to Face: he beheld him only in the Promise, but we in the Performance; his Face was veil'd with Types and Shadows under the Law, which gave a very imperfect and obscure Representation of him; but this Veil is now taken off under the Gospel, and we behold him with open Face: For he became Flesh and dwelt among us, and the Glory of his Divinity shin'd through the Mantle of his Humanity. Now if *Abraham* was so transported with Joy at so remote and obscure view of a Saviour to come, with how much greater Exultation are we to receive him, now actually come to us? Sure a promis'd Messiah cannot be a matter of more, or indeed of half so much Joy, as God manifest in the Flesh. And we who have liv'd to that happy Period, when all the Prophecies of him were fulfill'd, and all the Benefits promis'd

mis'd by him confer'd by his actual Appearance, should never cease adoring of and rejoicing in him.

The Angels proclaim'd his Birth-Day to be *Glad-tidings of great Joy to all People*; and accordingly began Hymns of Praise at his Nativity, singing, *Glory to God in the Highest, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

Let us then, by the Example of *Abraham* and the holy Angels, rejoice at the coming of a Saviour, and celebrate the Remembrance of him with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

Lastly, From Christ's affirming himself to be before *Abraham*, let us learn to acknowledg and adore his Divinity, who had a Being with the Father before all time, and gave a Being to all things in it. To him therefore with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd all Honour and Glory, **Might, Majesty and Dominion**, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE LIII.

The **EPISTLE** for the Sunday before *Easter*.

Phil. ii. 5——12.

Let this Mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the Form of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men, &c.

THIS Week immediately preceding the Feast of *Easter*, is more especially design'd to fit us for that great Solemnity, and to that end, is to be spent in more than ordinary Piety and Devotion; it was antiently call'd sometimes the Great Week, sometimes the Holy Week, because it hath a larger Service than any other Week, every Day having a second Service appointed for it, in which are rehears'd at large the Sufferings of Christ, as they

they are describ'd by the four Evangelists; that by reading and hearing the History of his Passion, we may be better prepar'd for the Myſtery of his Reſurrection; that by his riſing from the Dead, we may be quicken'd to Newneſs of Life.

This Day, which begins this Holy Week, is call'd by the Name of *Palm-Sunday*, being the Day on which our Saviour enter'd *Jeruſalem* with great Joy; ſome ſpreading their Garments, others cutting down Branches of Palm, carrying them in their Hands and ſtrewing them in the Way, which hath been remember'd with great Solemnity.

The Collect for the Day puts us in mind of the tender Love of God towards Mankind, in ſending his Son not only to take upon him our Fleſh, but to ſuffer in it the Death of the Croſs for our Sins; to the intent, that all Mankind ſhould follow the Example of his great Humility: and thence teaches us to pray, that we may both follow the Example of his Patience, and alſo be made Partakers of his Reſurrection.

The Epistle for the Day preſents us to this purpoſe with the higheſt and beſt Pattern for our Imitation, even the Son of God, who hath done and ſuffer'd all theſe great things for us. It begins with this Advice, *Let the ſame Mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*: What this Mind of his was, we ſhall ſee after. In general, it was, that we ſhould all ſo ſtand affected in Kindneſs, Humility, and Condeſcenſion to one another, as Chriſt Jeſus did towards us. 'Twas a wiſe piece of Advice from a learned Heathen, that every one ſhould propound to himſelf the beſt Patterns, not only of Vertue in general, but of each Vertue in particular; inſtancing in the Piety of *Socrates*, the Gravity of *Cato*, the Juſtice of *Ariſtides*, the Fidelity of *Regulus*, and the like: And to ſet them before him as a Copy to write after, and to tranſcribe their Vertues, as a Direction in the whole Courſe of his Life. This Advice the Apoſtle improves here to the beſt advantage, by ſetting before us the nobleſt Example of all Vertue that ever was or can be propounded to us; to wit, that of the Son of God, in whom all Grace and Goodneſs ſhin'd in their utmoſt Glory and Perfection.

The particular Grace or Vertue here recommended by Chriſt's Example, is that of Humility, a Grace much out of Requeſt before Chriſt gave it in Precept, and grac'd it by his own Example. If we peruſe the Writings of the wiſeſt
Mora-

Moralists, we shall scarce find the Name of Humility mention'd in the List of their Vertues; they took it for a Pusillanimity and Lowness of Mind, and so 'twas despis'd and trampled on by the Pride and Gallantry of the World: and so it had been still but a cast Vertue, had not our Saviour press'd it upon his Disciples, and likewise shew'd himself the greatest Pattern of it; saying to them, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* And the Apostle here speaks to the same purpose; *Let this Mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* But the better to take the Dimensions of Christ's Humility, St. Paul here gives us,

First, The exceeding great Height and Eminence of the Person that humbled himself; it was one, that *was in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal with God,* being himself God blessed for ever.

Secondly, The exceeding great Depth and Lowness of his Condescension: *He made himself of no Reputation, but humbled himself to the Form of a Servant, to the Likeness of Men, yea, even to Death, and that the worst of Deaths, even the Death of the Cross.* Again,

Thirdly, We have here the exceeding Largeness of the Reward, or the Height of his Exaltation that follow'd it: *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, &c.* In all which we may cry out with the Apostle, *O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the Love of God, that passeth Knowledge!* These things being the principal Matters contain'd in this Epistle, must be particularly spoken to. And,

First, The better to understand the Greatness of his Humility, the Apostle lets us know the Greatness and Dignity of his Person, in these words; *Who being in the Form of God, thought it no Robbery to be equal with God.* Where by being in the Form of God, is not meant his assuming any accidental Form, Shape, or Likeness, by which he might only seem to be as God, or to resemble the Deity; but the Form of God here signifies the Divine Nature and Essence; and his being in that Form, signifies his Divinity, that he was truly and really God, yea *God blessed for ever,* as it is express'd, *Rom. 9. 3.* And that this is the Sense of it, appears by the next words; *He thought it no Robbery to be equal with God:* Which implies the Reality of the Divine Nature, without which it had been the highest piece of Robbery and Presumption, to pretend to an Equality with God. To

whom will ye liken me, or make me equal? saith God, *Isa.* 46. 5. There can be nothing equal with God, but a Being that is infinite, eternal, and independent, as his is; for a Being that is finite, created, and depending, can bear no proportion or comparison with him: and therefore Christ's thinking it to be no Robbery, no Usurpation or Encroachment upon the Divine Nature, by making himself equal with God, shews him to subsist in that one infinite, eternal, and independent Nature; and consequently, that he is God co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, said to be *the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*; *Heb.* 1. 3. and therefore, to have the Fulness of the Godhead bodily dwelling in him. This is the Person that is here said to humble himself, *Majestatem præmisit, ut Humilitatem illustraret*, saith a Father; he sets forth the Greatness of his Majesty, to give the greater Lustre to his Humility: For a Beggar, or one in a mean Estate, to be humble, is a matter of no great Praise; for such a one hath nothing to puff him up, or if he had, every one would be ready to pull him down; all Pride in such is intolerable, and every one is apt to blow out such a Bubble, and to prick the Bladder of such a one's Pride and Vanity. But for a King to be humble, and to say with *David, I will be yet more humble*; yea, for the King of Kings to shew this great Humility, that is honourable and praise-worthy beyond all Expression.

Secondly, Now Christ, to this Height and Greatness of his Divinity, added the Depth and Lowness of his Humility; which is the next thing to be consider'd, in all the Steps and Degrees of it, as they are here related. And,

1st, Tho he was in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal with him, yet *he made himself of no Reputation*: the word in the Original is *ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν*, he emptied himself; he who had the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, was yet pleas'd to empty himself, and to appear as void of it as any other. He lessen'd and diminish'd himself, seeming to be much meaner in the Eye of the World than he really was; which is the same with what is here render'd, a *Man of no Reputation*. So the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold of him, that he should be *despis'd and rejected of Men*; having, as to outward Appearance, *no Form or Comeliness in him, nor any Beauty that we should desire him*; *Isa.* 53. 2, 3. Which things were after fulfill'd

fulfill'd in the many Reproaches, Indignities, and Contradiction of Sinners against himself, which he endur'd. All which he bore with an equal and undisturb'd Mind : and that because (as the words import) he made it his own Choice ; for 'tis said, he made *himself* of no Reputation : none else could have made him so without his Consent ; 'twas his own Act, and implies that he was rather desirous to be low and mean, and of no Reputation, than to appear in any of the Splendor and Glory of the World, of which vain Men are too much ambitious. This is the first Step of his great Humility ; *He empty'd himself, and became of no Reputation.*

The next is, *He took upon him the Form of a Servant, being made in the Likeness of Men* : that is, having stoop'd so low, as to take upon him our Nature, and to be made in the Likeness of Men, he stoop'd farther to the lowest Rank of them, and put himself into the mean Condition of a Servant : He who was in the Form of God, and so Lord of all, took upon him the Form of a Servant, the vilest and most abject sort of Men ; and the great King of Kings became a Subject to his own Subjects. This Office and Duty of a Servant he perform'd, not only by being obedient to his Father, and subject to his Laws who sent him, as he tells us, *John* 6. 38. but likewise by being obedient to earthly Powers, and subject to the Laws of Princes, under whom he lived : yea, he went lower yet, and became a Servant to all Mankind, by doing the hardest work and service for them ; *I am among you* (saith Christ) *as one that serveth.* He wash'd his Disciples Feet, and condescended to the meanest Offices, whereby he might do any good. In a word, he did all that for us that was requir'd of us to do, and suffer'd all that we should have undergone, and declin'd not the most difficult or meanest Services, to promote our Welfare and Salvation : which is the second Step of his Humility.

The third is, *Being found in fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.* This is the last degree of Misery that any can be expos'd to ; which with all good Men ends at their Death, and ceases in the Grave. To this our Saviour submitted for our sakes, and indeed to this end he took our Nature upon him, that he might therein suffer and die for our Sins : and greater Love than this can no Man shew, than for a Man to die for his Friend ; tho greater than this did Christ shew to us, in

dying for his Enemies. And this he did freely and of his own accord, without any Desire or Desert of ours; for *he humbled himself* (saith the Text) *and became obedient unto Death*. None else could thus humble him, nor did he owe this Obedience to any, but only as their Surety and Undertaker for them: *No Man* (saith he) *taketh my Life from me, but I lay it down of my self; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*: John 10. 18. This was his own voluntary Act, to which nothing but his Love to Mankind, and his Desire of their Salvation could lead him.

And now we are come very low in this point of his Humility; we have brought him even at death's door, and follow'd him to his Grave. But here is one thing more, that carries this matter yet farther; he became obedient to *Death*, not to an ordinary, fair, or honest Death, but to the Death of the Cross, the worst and foulest of all ways of dying; to an infamous, painful, and accursed Death, the Death of Slaves, Robbers, and the vilest Malefactors. There are ways of dying that are more easy and honourable, attended with Mourning and Funeral Pomp; but this of the Cross was attended only with Shame, Cruelty, and a Curse, for *cursed is every one that hangeth on a Tree*.

And thus we have brought our Saviour to the depth of his Humility, unless we will go one step farther, and follow him into Hell, where he likewise descended; which tho not mention'd here, is yet elsewhere fully declar'd.

From whence I proceed, in the next place, as the Epistle leads me, to his Exaltation, in the following words; *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, and every Tongue should confess, &c.* Wherefore, that implies the Cause or Motive of his Exaltation: and what was that? Why, the foregoing words tell us, it was for his Humility; he humbled himself, and therefore he must be exalted. Humility is the true way to Honour; and they that are lowest in their own eyes, are commonly highest in others. *Pride* (as the Wiseman tells us) *commonly goes before a Fall*; and all Men generally hate, despise, and pull down a proud Man. God respecteth the Humble, but beholdeth the Proud afar off; yea, St. Peter tells us, that *God resisteth the Proud, and shews Grace and Favour only to the Humble*. For this cause it was that God

so

so highly exalted his Son, 'twas for his great Humility and Condescension in the Work of Man's Redemption. And here we find something was done on God's part, and something is to be done on ours, in order to his Exaltation: that which was done on God's part, respected both his Person and his Name.

As for his Person, 'tis said here, that *God hath highly exalted him*; that is, his human Nature, for his divine Nature was not capable of Exaltation or Depression; his essential Glory as God was still the same, and cannot be increas'd or eclips'd: but 'twas his human Nature, in which he suffer'd, that was thus highly exalted: for God, as a Reward of his Sufferings, hath advanc'd him to the highest degree of Glory; he hath seated him at his own Right Hand, made him the sole supreme Prince and Governour of his Church, and given him all Power both in Heaven and Earth.

As for his Name, God hath highly exalted that too; for *he hath given him a Name, that is above every Name*. The exalting a Person without a good Name, is rather a Disparagement than a Dignity or Honour to him; for the higher he is, the more dirt will be cast upon him, and he will become the more visible Object of Envy and Contempt: but a good Name is sweeter than precious Ointment, for it perfumes the Person, and transmits the Odor to Posterity. And therefore God the Father, to make his Son's Exaltation compleat, gave him a *Name* too, and such a one as is *above every Name*. And what Name was that? Why, 'twas the Name of *Jesus*, which signifies a Saviour, and was by way of Excellence appropriated unto him: for tho others have been stiled Saviours, as *Joshua* and others were, upon the account of some temporal Deliverances and Salvations wrought by them; yet the eternal Salvation and Redemption wrought by Christ for Mankind, was infinitely above any of theirs, and therefore this Name was in a far higher and more eminent manner given to him: yea, all other Saviours must be sav'd by him, or else will be utterly lost, and destitute of all Salvation. Thus hath God rewarded and exalted his Son above all others, both in his Person, and in his Name.

But, *2dly*, something is to be done on our part likewise, by way of honouring and exalting of him; and that is to be done not only inwardly by the Reverence and due Esteem of the Mind, but outwardly by some suitable and humble Gestures of the Body; of which two are here par-

ticularly mention'd, *viz.* the bowing of the Knee, and the confessing of the Tongue; both which are requir'd likewise, *Rom. II. 14.*

1. This Name above all Names was given him, that *at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow*; where we are commanded to bow not only to his Person, but to his Name, which includes in it such a singular Dignity above all other Names or Titles, that 'tis worthy of the most eminent and superlative Respect, and the lowliest Reverence we can pay to it. And indeed we shew what Respect we have to his Person, by the Reverence we shew to his Name; for *holy and reverend is his Name*, *Psal. III. 9.* The Apostle tells us, that there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the Name of Jesus; and how can we do less, than bow and shew Reverence to it? Yea, how can we do enough to extol that high and glorious Name, by which such great things are done for us? This was one part of the Reward given to our Saviour for all his Sufferings, *viz.* that his Humiliation should be requited with an Exaltation, and the Shame and Ignominy he underwent should be rewarded with a Name of Dignity, Power, and Glory above all Names; at the mentioning whereof, every Knee should bow, and all Creatures should do obeysance. This was promis'd to him by God the Father, and it lies upon us his Sons to perform and pay this Reverence to him; yea, this Homage is to be paid by all his Creatures, express'd here by *things in Heaven*, which are the holy Angels, who are still singing Praises and Hallelujahs to his Name: By *things in the Earth*, which are all Men, who are to bow and shew Reverence to his holy Name: And by *things under the Earth*, which are the Devils and evil Spirits, who are forc'd to fear and tremble at this great Name. In a word, we honour God by honouring of this Name, and by bowing and falling down to it we magnify and extol him that wears it: and therefore as he was exalted for his Humility, so let us exalt him still by ours. This for the Knee, which we are to bow in honour to him: but that is not all, for,

2. He calls for the Tongue too, in the next words; *And that every Tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* The Tongue is in Scripture said to be the Glory of a Man, and is never more so, than when 'tis employ'd to the Glory of God. This is the use that we are here directed to put it to, to confess the Power, Great-

Greatness, and Dominion of Christ; that by humbling himself he is become Lord of all, having all Power in Heaven and Earth, and so is able both to crush his Enemies, and to crown his Friends. But this confessing him to be Lord, implies not only his Ability to save; we are willing enough to own that, and to cry, *Lord save us, we perish*: but likewise his Power to command; we are not so forward to confess that, nor to say, *Lord what wilt thou have us to do?* And yet this is the best way of confessing his Lordship, without which we do but mock him with an empty Title, and he will upbraid us, saying, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the thing that I command you?* Let this then be our care, to ascribe Honour, Might, and Dominion to the Son, as Lord of Heaven and Earth; but yet not so as to eclipse or diminish, but to add to and illustrate the Glory of the Father, who sent and so highly rewarded him.

This is the Sum of the Epistle for this Day. The Use the Apostle makes of it, is,

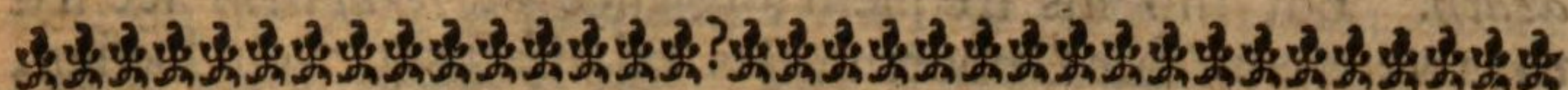
1. To exhort that the same Mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus; that as he was no way high-minded, nor had any proud Looks, but humbled himself, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, tho he was Lord of all; so should we be like-minded, not to mind high things, but to condescend to Men of low Estate. This Lesson he himself would have us learn of him, for he was meek and lowly in Heart, and therefore would have us to banish all Pride and Vanity, which are so hateful to God and Man, and to follow the Example of his great Humility.

2. From Christ's being so highly exalted, after he had humbled himself, we learn that Humility is the best way to Honour; and they that will rise in the Esteem of God or Men, must be mean and lowly in their own eyes: for *he pulleth down the Mighty from their Seat, and exalteth the Humble and Meek*. Our Saviour hath told us, that *he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. They that seek for Honour by Arrogance, Self-conceit, and taking too much upon them, always work the wrong way; for Pride ever misseth its Aim, and never finds the Honour it seeks. They that would seek it aright, must go by the ways of Meekness and Humility, for they only lead to Exaltation.

3. From the Command, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, we learn upon what good Foundation that antient Practice of bowing at the Name of Jesus is grounded. 'Tis, we see, a piece of that Honour that God the Father confer'd upon his Son, for doing the Work of Man's Redemption: and shall we unworthily deny him that Honour, which was granted him merely for our sakes? Certainly they whose Knees are too stiff to bow to him, will find his Hand too short to save them, or to reach out any Blessings unto them. Neither should our Tongue be less sparing in confessing Christ to be Lord, to the Glory of God the Father; for *with the Heart Man believeth, but with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.*

Lastly, From Christ's being obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, for our sakes, we may learn for ever to remember that his inestimable Love; and not to neglect those Pledges of it, in which he hath will'd us to commemorate it. "Lord, hast thou lov'd us so much, as
 " to endure the greatest Torments of Body and Soul in
 " our behalf; and shall we love thee so little, as to shew
 " no regard or remembrance of all this? God forbid! Let
 " that be far from us." To avoid which, let us prepare to meet our Lord at his own Table, there to celebrate the Memory of what he hath done and suffer'd for us, and to receive the Benefits purchas'd by both, to the eternal Joy and Comfort of our Souls.





DISCOURSE LIV.

The GOSPEL for the Sunday before *Easter*.

Matthew xxvii. 1—55.

When the Morning was come, all the Chief Priests and Elders of the People took counsel against Jesus, to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and deliver'd him to Pontius Pilate, &c.

THIS Gospel, with the rest that follow on each Day of this Holy Week, give us an ample Account of the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour, together with the many Circumstances that went before, and came after it. But the better to consider and contract the several Scenes, Steps, and Degrees of this direful Tragedy, 'twill be requisite to discourse of these several Parts of it,

First, Of their apprehending or taking our Saviour.

Secondly, Of their Arraignment and Examination of him.

Thirdly, Of their condemning and passing Sentence upon him.

Lastly, Of the Execution of the Sentence, together with the Mockery, Shame, and Cruelty exercis'd upon him, in putting him to death. Of each particularly, as related by the Evangelists. And,

First, Of the apprehending or taking of him, which you know is the first Act of Justice exercis'd on Offenders, who are wont to be apprehended and arraign'd, before they are condemn'd or executed. Suitable whereunto, the Sons of Violence laid hands upon our Saviour to take him; which was done by the Counsel or Conspiracy of the Chief Priests and Elders: for we read, that they held a Consultation, how they might take Jesus by Subtlety, and carry him away;
Mat.

Mat. 26. 4. and here, that *they took counsel to put him to death.* But tho his frequent Presence at *Jerusalem* seem'd to give them fair Opportunities of effecting their Design, yet the Reputation he had with the People, made them not so forward to embrace them; and therefore they dealt under-hand with one of his own Disciples, corrupting him with Money, to betray him with the greater Secrecy into their hands.

The Place where they apprehended him, was in the Garden of *Gethsemane*, where after the Treachery of *Judas* in betraying him, a Band of Soldiers seiz'd on his Person, haled him away before *Pilate*, and from thence into Prison; where he met with no better Company, than an infamous Robber, named *Barrabbas*, who yet, by a Custom of releasing one at the Feast, was dismiss'd at the Request of the People, whilst our Saviour was sacrific'd to the Clamour and Crucifiges of the Multitude.

For the Manner of apprehending him, *St. Luke* informs us, that *they came out against him as against a Thief, with Swords and Staves; Luke 22. 52.* This great Exemplar of Meekness and Patience was thus roughly handled by the merciless Soldiers: and tho *Peter*, out of a high Resentment hereof, offer'd to make Resistance, by drawing his Sword and cutting off the Ear of one of the High Priest's Servants; yet our Saviour sharply check'd his inconsiderate Zeal and Rashness, partly because they did all by the Authority of the Magistrate, against whom he would not allow or encourage the least Resistance; and partly, because it behov'd him to suffer these things, for the compleating of Man's Redemption.

Having thus taken him, they cast their Cords on him, and carry'd him away bound, and deliver'd him to *Pontius Pilate the Governour; ver. 2.* At the sight hereof, *Judas who had betray'd him*, was struck with a great Remorse of Conscience, and repented him of what he had done; bringing again the thirty Pieces of Silver to the Chief Priests and Elders, and saying with no small Trouble of Mind, *I have sinned, in that I have betray'd the innocent Blood.* But they with little or no regard leaving him to his own Guilt, led him to despair; so that he cast the Pieces of Silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hang'd himself; *ver. 3, 4, 5.* His guilty Conscience flew in his face, and fill'd him with that Horror and Despair, that would give him no rest, till he had dispatch'd and made away with himself.

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In the Acts of the Apostles 'tis said, that *falling down headlong on his face, he burst asunder in the midst, and his Bowels gush'd out*; Chap. i. 18. The Chief Priests finding the Mony in the Temple, would not put it into the Treasury, because it was the Price of Blood: but, as the following Verses tell us, *they bought with it a Potter's Field, to bury Strangers in, call'd therefore the Field of Blood*; according to a Prophecy of *Jeremy*, extant in *Zech.* 11, 12, 13. and suppos'd to be receiv'd from him.

Now this Circumstance of Christ's being taken and apprehended, was prefigur'd in the Old Testament, by *Joseph's* being taken and carry'd prisoner into *Egypt*, *Gen.* 39. And was likewise foretold by the Psalmist, saying, *The Kings of the Earth set themselves, and the Rulers take counsel against the Lord and his Anointed*; *Psal.* 2. 2. This for the first Act of his Sufferings, viz. his Apprehension,

The Second is, his Arraignment or Accusation before *Pilate*. And that begins, *ver.* 11, &c. where *Jesus* standing before *Pilate*, the Governour ask'd him, saying, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* that is, Art thou the *Messias* so long promis'd and expected by that People? To whom he reply'd, *Thou sayest it*; and sayest true, for so I am: *Mark* 14. 62.

But when the Chief Priests and Elders began to accuse him, laying many things to his charge, he knowing there was no manner of Truth or Reason in what they alledg'd, answer'd nothing, making no Reply. At which the Governour said to him, *Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee?* But he persisted still in his Silence, and answer'd them to never a word; insomuch that the Governour marvelled greatly. And when the People call'd loudly for releasing *Barrabbas* at the Feast, and destroying *Jesus*, he ask'd of them, *Why, what Evil hath he done?* What have you to alledg against him? But they supposing *Pilate* inclin'd to save him, were the more earnest and vehement in their Clamours to put him to death, saying, *Let him be crucify'd*. *Pilate* here began to be in a great strait, knowing that for no capital Crime, but for mere Envy they had deliver'd him to him: which Trouble was the more increas'd by a Message sent to him by his Wife, whilst he was sitting on the Judgment-Seat, saying, *Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffer'd many things this day in a Dream because of him*.

Pilate

Pilate therefore, to satisfy his Conscience and his Wife, try'd all ways to release him and let him go, declaring his Opinion of his Innocency, and saying more than once, that he could find no fault in him. But nothing he could say or do would appease the Rage of the rude Multitude, especially being set on by the Chief Priests and Elders: so that instead of allaying their Violence, their Fury increas'd, redoubling their Clamours, and crying more exceedingly, *Crucify him, Crucify him*. Insomuch that when *Pilate* saw he could prevail nothing, but that rather a Tumult was made, he took Water, and wash'd his Hands before the Multitude, saying, *I am innocent of the Blood of this just Person, see ye to it*: meaning, that by that Ceremony he in the presence of them all clear'd himself of all Guilt, and laid the whole of that matter upon them. Upon which words, the People all reply'd, *His Blood be on us and our Children*. So eagerly did they thirst for his Blood, that they readily took all the Guilt of it upon themselves and their Posterity. And indeed by that Imprecation they entail'd upon them the Wrath of God, the Divine Vengeance having pursu'd that People and Nation ever since.

After this, *Pilate* at the Importunity of the People released *Barrabbas*; and then proceeded to scourge *Jesus*, hoping that would satisfy them, without inflicting any farther Punishment: and therefore we find him saying, *Luke* 23. 16. that neither he nor *Herod* could find any thing in him worthy of Death; *I will therefore* (saith he) *chastise him and release him*. But the People not content with that, but still pressing for his Crucifixion, *Pilate* added that to his Scourging, and deliver'd him up to be crucify'd. And this will lead to the

Third Step or Degree of his Passion, viz. his Condemnation, or the passing Sentence upon him; which was done by *Pilate*, who, as *St. Luke* tells us, gave Sentence that it should be as they requir'd, *Chap.* 23. 24. meaning, as the Jews requir'd, which was to be crucify'd.

But how came *Pilate*, knowing his Innocency, and so often declaring that he found no fault in him, to pass Sentence upon him against the Judgment and Sentence of his own Conscience? Why, this he did, partly for fear of the People, whose Clamours were so vehement and malicious, that he fear'd what their Outrage and Violence might lead them to; and partly, for fear of the Emperor, whom he

he had displeas'd before; and doubted how far any Favour to one that pretended to be a King, and so an Enemy to *Cesar*, might farther incense him: tho in truth he was not excusable in either.

After this Sentence past upon our Saviour to be crucify'd, he was deliver'd up to a Band of Soldiers, who exercis'd many Acts of Mockery and Cruelty upon him before the Execution: for *they stripped him of his Clothes, and put on him a scarlet Robe*; the true Emblem of their crimson Sins. Because he stil'd himself a King, they prepar'd and put on him all the mock Ensigns of Royalty. Instead of a Crown of Gold to adorn his Head, *they platted for him a Crown of Thorns*, to gore his Temples. Because he should not want a Scepter, *they put a Reed into his Right Hand*, and then in mockery bow'd their heads to him, saying, *Hail King of the Jews!* And having thus insulted and expos'd him with all the Pageantry and Ceremonys of a Mock-King, *they took the Robe off from him, and put on his own Rayment, and led him away to be crucify'd.* And this will lead me to the

Fourth Step of his Sufferings, which was the Execution of the Sentence. But because there were some previous Circumstances of Shame and Cruelty, that were wont to go before Crucifixion, let us see how they were executed upon our Blessed Saviour. As,

1st, They that were to be crucify'd were made to bear their Cross to the Place of Execution, which was always without the City. So *Plutarch* tells us, that Malefactors led forth to Execution, each one bears his own Cross; or if they were like to faint, then some Porters or Burden-bearers were forc'd to carry it after them. Accordingly *St. John* tells us, that Jesus being led away to Execution, bore his own Cross, *John 19. 17.* till finding him oppress'd and sinking under the weight, they met with one *Simon of Cyrene*, and him they compell'd to bear it for him. This was prefigur'd by *Isaac's* bearing the Wood for the sacrificing of himself; and to this our Saviour alludes, in bidding his Disciples to take up their Cross and follow him.

2^{dly}, They that were to be crucify'd, were first scourg'd: so *St. Jerom* tells us, *Legibus Romanis sancitum est, ut qui crucifigitur prius flagellis verberetur*: 'Tis commanded by the Laws of the *Romans*, that he who is to be crucify'd, be first scourg'd. Accordingly, *Pilate's* Sentence was first to scourge, and then to lead him away to be crucify'd. As he

was

was led along, they scoff'd, revil'd, and spit upon him, and follow'd him with the bitterest Taunts and Reproaches that Malice could invent. With these and many more Indignities they brought him to a place call'd *Golgotha*, which is by Interpretation the Place of a Skull; so call'd from the Bones and Skulls of Malefactors that were laid up there, where there was a deep Cavity or Hole in a Rock, that serv'd for a Charnel-House or Repository of dead Mens Bones; where likewise were deposited the Crosses that were brought by Persons to the place of Execution.

After this, they brought him to Mount *Calvary* about a Mile distant from *Jerusalem*, suppos'd to be the same with Mount *Moriah*, upon which *Abraham* was appointed by God to offer up his only Son *Isaac*; and was the Place where this great Sacrifice of the Son of God was to be offer'd.

Arriv'd now at the Place of his Sufferings, they make all things ready for his Execution; before which there was a Custom among the *Jews*, grounded upon those words of *Solomon*, *Give strong Drink to them that are ready to perish, and Wine to those that be of heavy Hearts*; Prov. 31. 6. From hence, I say, there grew a Custom of giving to condemned Persons before their Suffering some comforting and strengthening Drink, mingled with some aromatical Ingredients, that had both a supporting and stupifying Quality. According to this Custom they brought to our Saviour some of this compounded Liquor, which their Malice had mingled with Gall; thereby changing the Cup of Consolation and Refreshment, that was wont to be given to condemn'd Persons, into a nauseous, bitter, and poisonous Cup: *They gave him Vinegar to drink, mingled with Gall.* Which Circumstance of Barbarity was foretold by the Psalmist in the Description of his Sufferings, saying, *They gave me Gall to eat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me Vinegar to drink*; Psal. 69. 21, 22. This bitter Potion when he had tasted, 'tis said, *he would not drink it.* Tho he at that time labour'd under a very great Thirst, yet he would not drink it, because he would not accelerate his own Death; and being to pay our Debt to the uttermost, would not take any thing that might any way lighten or mitigate it.

After this, they proceeded to crucify him, nailing his Feet to the upright Beam of the Cross, and his Hands with the Arms stretch'd out to the transverse Piece at the Top; as 'tis represented in a Crucifix. This was foretold by the Psalmist,

Psalmist, saying, *They pierc'd my Hands and my Feet, Psal. 22. 16.* Being thus fasten'd to the Cross, the Executioners strip'd him of his Clothes, *parting his Garments, and casting lots for them; that it might be fulfill'd what was spoken by the Prophet, They parted my Garments among them, and upon my Vesture did they cast lots.* They divided his Garments into four Parts (as St. John tells us) and gave to each Soldier a Part; but for his Coat, that was without Seam, that they would not rent, but cast lots for it, *John 19. 24, 25.* This being done, Pilate according to the Custom of the Romans, order'd his Accusation or pretended Crime to be written over his Head in capital Letters in these words, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS:** which that it might be the better read and understood by all, St. Luke tells us, *was written in the three great Languages, Latin, Greek and Hebrew; Luke 23. 38.*

But to make his Death the more infamous, he *was crucify'd between two Thieves, the one at his right Hand, and the other at his Left;* as if he had been the Arch-malefactor. Which Thieves upbraided him for pretending to be the Son of God, and yet coming to so shameful and miserable an end; *ver. 38, 44.* tho St. Luke affirms this of one of them only, and not of both, *Luke 23. 39.* This was prophesy'd of him by *Isaias*, saying, *He was numbred among Transgressors, Isa. 53. 12.* While he was hanging on the Cross, *The Multitude that passed by, reviled him, wagging their Heads, expressing both in their Words and Gestures the greatest Scorn and Detestation of him; saying in derision to him, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save thy self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross.* Likewise also *the Chief Priests, with the Scribes and Elders, mocked and upbraided him with his former Miracles, willing him now to shew one upon himself, saying, He saved others, himself he cannot save: if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe him.* They twitted him with his relying upon God, and the Relation he pretended to him; *He trusted in God (say they) let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God.*

Now from the sixth Hour, there was Darkness over all the Land, until the ninth Hour; that is, from twelve of the Clock at noon, till three, according to our Computation, there was a general Eclipse or Darkning of the Sun over all the Land of Judea, and the Country thereabout; or as others

others will have it, over all the Parts of the World. Now this Eclipse was not natural, the Moon being then at the full, but supernatural and miraculous, to signify that the Sun of Righteousness was then about to be eclips'd, and for a while to be overcast with Darknes: which made him say, *This is your Hour, and the Power of Darknes*; Luke 22. 53.

About the ninth Hour, Jesus in the Extremity of his Sufferings seeming to be deserted of his Father, cry'd out in the Anguish of his Soul, *Eli, Eli, &c. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Which words are found in that prophetick Psalm of *David*, viz. *Psal. 22.* which was fulfill'd in this direful Tragedy of the Son of God.

But his barbarous Enemies desisted not from their Reproaches even to the last Gasps; for hearing him twice pronounce the word *Eli*, they mockingly said, *He calleth for Elias, let us see whether he will come and save him.*

In this his last Agony, Jesus saying, that he thirsted, as it were to take off the last Dregs of the Cup of God's Wrath against Sinners, *One of them straitway ran, and took a Sponge, and filled it with Vinegar, and put it on a Reed, and gave him to drink.* After which, he cry'd again with a loud Voice; and uttering (as St. Luke tells us) these words, *Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit*, he yielded up the Ghost.

Thus died the Son of God a cruel and ignominious, but withal an innocent and glorious Death; which was follow'd with many prodigious Signs of Wonder and Sorrow: for behold the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves were open'd, and many Bodies of Saints which slept arose, and came out of the Graves after his Resurrection, and went into the Holy Place, and appear'd unto many. The whole Creation seem'd to groan and lament the Fall of so great a Person; the Sun drew in its Light, and was covered with a Veil of Darknes; the Earth trembled, and shook with great Convulsions; the Heavens were all overcast and cloth'd in black, as the chief Mourners at his Funeral; and all things but these unrelenting Jews were appall'd and confounded at the Passion of our Lord. Now when the Centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the Earthquake, which is said to be the greatest that was ever known, they began to quake themselves; for when they saw those things that were done, they fear'd greatly, saying,

saying, Truly this was the Son of God. They were fill'd with Terrour, their Hearts accusing them for what they had said and done against him; not wagging their Heads as they did before in derision, but smiting their Breasts, for fear of what the Indignities offer'd to the Son of God might bring upon them.

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day; which may teach us,

1. The heinous and provoking Nature of Sin, that requir'd the Blood of the Son of God for its Expiation. If any can be so dangerously mistaken, as to think Sin but a slight matter, let him enter into the High-Priest's Palace, the Judgment-Hall, and Mount *Calvary*, and there see what it cost our Saviour to do it away: let him take a walk in the Garden of *Gethsemane*, and behold there the Pangs, Throws and Agonies of a bleeding and crucify'd Saviour; and then he may soon perceive Sin, which he now makes light of, to be the heaviest and most intolerable Burden in the World.

2. We learn hence the infinite Love of God the Father, in giving his Son; and likewise of God the Son, in giving himself to death for us: this is such an unparallel'd Act of Kindness and Condescension, that *St. John* was at a loss how to express it, saying, *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, &c.* And *St. Paul*, like one wrapt up with Wonder and Astonishment, cries out, *O the Height, and Depth, the Length and Breadth of the Love of God, that passeth Knowledge!*

3. From Christ's Death and Passion, we may learn Patience under all the Sufferings that befall us. Shall we grudge but to sip of that bitter Cup, which he drank off to the very Dregs? And when his way was strew'd with Thorns, shall we expect nothing but Roses? When he hath borne the Heat of the Day, and the heavy Burden of God's Wrath, shall we droop and faint under a few light and gentle Afflictions? Yea, when we consider that all that he underwent was only in our behalf, nothing should be thought difficult, that we suffer in his Cause; especially having forewarn'd us of the Cross, and plac'd it in the Highway to a never-fading Crown of Bliss and Glory.

Lastly, Let us learn from hence thankfully to remember the Death and Passion of our Saviour, especially in that memorial Feast which he himself instituted for his own Re-

membrance. *Do this in remembrance of me*, was his last dying Request, which we ought therefore never to forget: So shall we partake now of the Benefits of his Passion, and hereafter of the Glories and Triumphs of his Resurrection, &c.



DISCOURSE LV.

The EPISTLE for Good-Friday.

Heb. x. 1—26.

The Law having a Shadow of good things to come, and not the very Image of the things, can never with those Sacrifices, which they offer'd Year by Year continually, make the Comers thereunto perfect; for then would they not have ceas'd to be offer'd: because that the Worshipers once purg'd, should have had no more Conscience of Sins, &c.

THE three Collects for this Day of our Saviour's Passion, beseech Almighty God graciously to behold his Family the Church, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to die; and that he, by whose Spirit the whole Body of the Church is govern'd and sanctify'd, would receive the Supplications and Prayers offer'd up by all the Members in it: As also to have mercy upon all *Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks*; that by taking away all the Hindrances of their Conversion, they may be fetch'd home to his Flock, and be made one Fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. Where we are taught to pray as Christ did for his very Enemies: and as he express'd the height of his Love this Day, by dying for them; so does the Church the height of her Charity, by praying for them.

The Epistle for the Day sets forth the Excellency, the Extent, the End, and the All-sufficiency of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death: in all which it vastly exceeds all the Sacrifices and Expiations under the Law, which were but

so many Types and faint Representations of this great propitiatory Sacrifice under the Gospel. So the first Verse tells us, *The Law having a Shadow of good things to come, and not the very Image of the things*; meaning, that it contain'd only an imperfect Shadow or Resemblance of the Mercies that were to come under the Gospel, and not the Substance or lively Representation of the things themselves; and so the Difference between them was the same that there is between the rough Draught of a Picture, and one that is finish'd and drawn to the Life in all its Lineaments and Colours. And therefore *the Law could never, with those Sacrifices which they offer'd Year by Year continually, make the Comers thereunto perfect*: that is, those reiterated Sacrifices, which for their Imperfection were to be so often repeated, could never purify the Conscience, or work out any perfect Pardon or Peace; for if they could, *then would they not have ceas'd to be offer'd, because that the Worshipers once purg'd, should have had no more Conscience of Sins*. If the legal Sacrifices could have brought the Comers thereunto to perfection, so as to procure a full Pardon and purging away all Sin, then would the Offering of them have still continu'd, nor would there have been any need of any other future Sacrifice; for if the former could have effectually done the Work for which they were offer'd, there could have been no want of any later Sacrifice to supply the Defect. As in a Cure, when 'tis thorowly wrought, there can be no need of applying another Medicine; so the Conscience once thorowly purg'd and reconcil'd to God, whereby all former and future Sins are wholly remitted and done away, would have no more Sense of Guilt, and consequently no more need of any farther Sacrifice: whereas *in those Sacrifices there is a Remembrance again made of Sins every Year*. In the legal Sacrifices there was only a Commemoration of Sins, not a purging them away; and therefore both the Sacrifice and the Remembrance were renew'd every Year, and that was done on the Day of Expiation, when they were wont to call to mind not only the Sins of the Year past, but the Sins of former Years, for which they had offer'd before at the time of committing them, to signify, that there had not yet been any full and perfect Expiation made, but they expected one to come, which is that one true Sacrifice of Christ, that was alone able to satisfy Divine Justice for all Sins.

This could not be done by any or all the Sacrifices under the Law ; *For it is not possible that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats should take away Sins.* 'Tis not in the power of brute Beasts to make an Atonement for the Sins of Men, nor can the Blood of any inferiour Creatures purify the Conscience, or pacify the Wrath of God for them. It requir'd a higher and nobler Sacrifice to purge away our Guilt, and nothing less than the Blood of the Son of God was able to effect it ; for Satisfaction for Sin must be made by the same Nature that committed it, for which reason he became the Son of Man, to make Atonement for us. Besides which, the Satisfaction was to be of an infinite Merit before God, which no Offerings of brute Beasts could be ; whereas the Sacrifice of Christ was abundantly such, being the offering up of the Blood of the Son of God.

Wherefore when he cometh into the World, he saith, Sacrifice and Offering thou wouldst not, but a Body hast thou prepar'd me. These words are quoted out of the 40th Psalm, ver. 6, 7. where the Psalmist brings in Christ, as the Messiah, thus speaking to his Father ; Sacrifice and Offering thou desirest not, but that which thou wouldst have is a human Body, prepar'd to suffer for the doing away of Sins, and the obtaining Mercy and Pardon of them ; and such a Body hast thou prepar'd for me, fram'd and sanctify'd by the Holy Ghost, which I must offer up upon the Cross, for an Expiation of the Sins of the World. The words here render'd, *A Body hast thou prepar'd me*, in the Original are, *Mine Ear hast thou pierc'd* ; so they are render'd in the Psalms, *Mine Ear hast thou open'd* ; to signify, that as the Servant's Ear was to be nail'd to the Door-Post, *Deut. 15. 17.* so Christ's Body was to be nail'd to the Cross, to fit it to be that perfect and compleat Sacrifice that was typify'd by those under the Law, and to supply the Defects of them. For

In Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices for Sin (saith he) thou hast had no pleasure ; that is, I know the Offerings and legal Sacrifices were not so acceptable in thy sight, as not being able to satisfy thy Wrath, or reconcile thee to Sinners : And therefore Christ, to shew his Readiness to undertake and accomplish it, adds, *Then, said I, lo, I come (in the Volume of the Book it is written of me) to do thy Will, O God :* that is, I declar'd my Willingness to perform all that which was agreed between us from all Eternity, and in time reveal'd to the Prophets, and by them deliver'd
down

down to the last Ages; that I am that Lamb of God, decreed to be slain before the Foundation of the World. Accordingly, behold I come to do thy Will, O God, and to suffer all thou requirest of me to compleat the Work of Man's Redemption.

From hence the Apostle argues the Weakness and Deficiency of all the legal Sacrifices and Oblations, in order to the Remission of Sin; and the All sufficiency of Christ's sacrificing himself to that end, in the following words: *Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and Burnt-Offerings, and Offering for Sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst Pleasure therein, which are offer'd by the Law; then, said he, Lo' I come to do thy Will, O God: he taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.* The Sense of which words is, that the Sacrifices appointed by *Moses's* Law are of no force or efficacy at all with God, but are to give place to the Sacrifice and Sufferings of Christ: the former being annul'd and abolish'd by Christ's Death, vanish as Types and Shadows do at the Coming of the Substance; the latter succeeding, and being set up in their room, renders the other useless. By which we see the Folly and Vanity of the *Jews*, in seeking Justification by the Works of the Law, which have no Prevalence or Acceptance at all with God, and disclaiming the Merits of Christ, by which alone they can be justify'd and sav'd.

Hitherto the Apostle hath been shewing the Impotence, the Insufficiency, and the Imperfection of all the Sacrifices under the Law; partly from the frequent reiterating and repeating of them, partly from their utter Inability to purge away Sin, and partly from their yielding to a nobler and better Sacrifice under the Gospel: all which shew them to be only shadows of good things to come, but the Substance is Christ. And therefore

The remaining Part of the Epistle is taken up in setting forth the Excellence and Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice above the former, together with some useful Lessons infer'd from it. The transcendent Perfection of it appears,

1st, By the blessed Fruits and Effects of it: for 'tis by *this Will of God, that we are sanctify'd thro the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ*; ver. 10. By this we that were guilty appear innocent and righteous before God; not by any personal Righteousness of our own, but thro the Merit of his Atonement. 'Twas impossible, we see, for the Blood of Bulls and of Goats, or of any other brute Beasts, to

take away Sin, that had not Merit or Value enough to purchase or procure such a Blessing: but *the Blood of Christ cleanses us from all Sin*; not from this or that only, but from all Iniquity. So our Church teaches us, that by one Oblation of himself, he made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World; which plainly demonstrates its infinite and transcendent Worth and Excellency. Again,

2ly, The Apostle proves the Dignity and Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice, from its being but once offer'd, and needing not to be reiterated or offer'd up again. So we read, *ver. 10.* that Christ's Body was offer'd up *once for all*; that one Oblation of himself to Death for us hath done the whole Work, and compleated all at once. 'Twas the Weakness, the Disgrace, and the Imperfection of the legal Sacrifices, that they stood in need of a constant Repetition: The High Priest went every Year, on the Great Day of Expiation, into the Holy of Holies, to offer up the yearly Sacrifice, *Heb. 9. 25.* And here we are told of the inferiour Priests, that *they stand daily ministring, and offering oftentimes the same Sacrifices, which can never take away Sins*; *ver. 11.* But 'tis the Glory, the Greatness, and the Perfection of Christ's Sacrifice, that it did all the Business at once, and wants no Reiteration: *He needeth not daily* (saith the Apostle) *as those High Priests, to offer up Sacrifice, first for his own Sins, and then for the Peoples; for this he did once, when he offer'd up himself*: *Heb. 7. 27.* And here the same Apostle tells us, that *this Man, after he had offer'd one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever sat down at the Right Hand of God*; *ver. 12.* Having by one compleat Oblation and Atonement satisfy'd for the Sins of the whole World, he receiv'd the high and just Reward of it, to be seated for ever at the right Hand of God, *from thenceforth expecting till his Enemies be made his Footstool*; triumphing over them at present, and shortly subduing and making them all subject to him.

But for his Friends and Followers, *he hath, by one Offering, perfected for ever them that are sanctify'd*; meaning, that he hath fully purg'd away their Sins, reconcil'd them unto God, and justify'd them by his Grace: Of all which he hath given *the Holy Ghost as a Witness to us*, saying in the Holy Scriptures, *This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, I will put my Laws into their Hearts, and in their Minds will I write them, and their Sins*
and

and their Iniquities will I remember no more: that is, he would seal a new Covenant to them by his Blood, in which he would first purify their Hearts and Minds, and after pardon all their Transgressions. From whence he argues the Validity of Christ's Sacrifice, that having attain'd its End, there can be no farther necessity of repeating it: for *where Remission of these is, there is no more offering for Sin*; ver. 18.

By all this we learn the Absurdity as well as Impiety of the Sacrifice of the Mass, us'd and taught in the Church of *Rome*, whereby Christ is offer'd up again in every Sacrament; contrary to what *St. Paul* here affirms, that Jesus was to be offer'd up but once only, and by that one Oblation he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctify'd, so that any farther Oblation of him must be altogether needless; yea, 'tis indeed impossible: for Christ's Body being in Heaven, and seated at the right Hand of God, cannot in this manner be fetch'd thence, and offer'd up again. Besides, to teach that Christ is daily offer'd up in the Sacrament, is to believe what he did on the Cross not to be sufficient, and so to derogate from the Dignity and Efficacy of his most meritorious Sacrifice; yea, 'tis to equal the daily Offerings in *Moses's* Law with the Death of our Saviour, by continually reiterating it like theirs. Christ declar'd upon the Cross, that the Work of our Redemption was finish'd; and therefore the Fathers generally tell us, that there is but one Sacrifice, and that the Sacrament is only a Memorial of it: in which we are not to renew, but to remember what was done and purchas'd by it with our greatest Praises and Thanksgivings; and all that is now left us to do, is by Faith to apply to our selves the Benefits of it, and to pray it may be effectual to us.

From hence the Apostle proceeds to recount some of the great Privileges obtain'd by this meritorious Sacrifice, in the next words; *Having therefore, Brethren, Boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, not known before, which he hath consecrated for us thro the Veil, that is to say, his Flesh*; meaning, that we have free Access unto God, to offer our Prayers and Praises to him by the Merits of Christ, a new and living way, not by dead Sacrifices as before, but by a way consecrated thro the Veil of his Flesh: where the Apostle alludes to the Veil or Curtain that cover'd the Sanctuary, by which as the High Priest enter'd into the Holy of Holies, so are

we now admitted into the Presence of God, thro the black Veil of his Sufferings, which he underwent for us in his Flesh. *And having such an High Priest over the House of God*, to take care of his Church, and every faithful Member of it, to present their Prayers unto God, and to procure the Acceptance of them, by the Merits and Virtue of his Intercession: having, I say, such high and eminent Privileges by Christ's Oblation of himself for us, the Apostle infers from thence two or three useful and excellent Lessons. As,

1. *Let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies wash'd with pure Water*; ver. 22. that is, let us serve God with a sincere and unfeign'd Worship, with a firm Persuasion of finding Acceptance with him, having our Souls purify'd from all inward Pollution, and our Bodies cleans'd from all outward Defilement. The Expression of *sprinkling the Heart from an evil Conscience*, alludes to a Custom under the Law, where he that had touch'd any unclean thing, was to be sprinkled by the Priest before he enter'd the Congregation: And *the Body's being wash'd with pure Water*, alludes to the Laver of Regeneration under the Gospel, where baptiz'd Persons are wash'd from their original Corruption. And both Expressions imply, that Christ's sacrificing himself for us should engage us to the greatest Purity both of Soul and Body, which must be therefore minded by all, that would receive any benefit by the shedding of his Blood.

2. *Let us hold fast the Profession of the Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promis'd*; ver. 23. that is, let us be constant to the Faith of a crucify'd Saviour, and be as ready to profess it with the Mouth, as to confess it in the Heart. Let no Temptations either of Prosperity or Adversity shake our Belief of him, or make us in the least waver in it; but rather say with St. Paul, *We preach Christ crucify'd, tho it be a Stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks Foolishness*. And elsewhere, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, which is the Power of God unto Salvation*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: yea, he was so far from being ashamed, that he glory'd in the Cross, and prefer'd it above all the Triumphs of Rome. He told the *Corinthians*, that he desir'd to know nothing among them *save Jesus Christ, and him crucify'd*: And the *Philippians*, that he counted all things but Loss and Dung, in comparison of

of the Excellency of that Divine Knowledg. Whatever Dangers and Discouragements then we may meet with, let us ever own and put our Trust in a dying Saviour; for he hath promis'd to stand by those that stand firm to their Profession, and we may safely depend upon his Fidelity, for he is faithful that hath promis'd.

3. *Let us consider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to good Works;* ver. 24. that is, let the Sense of Christ's Love in dying for us, kindle in our Breast the most ardent Flames of Love towards him, and likewise to one another, whom he hath made Partakers of the Benefits of his Death. Let us call upon each other, to express this Love by all the Acts of Duty and Thankfulness, abounding in Works of Piety and Charity, knowing that *Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*

Lastly, *Let us not forsake the assembling our selves together, as the manner of some is, but exhort one another, and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching;* ver. 25. that is, let us not leave the publick Congregations of Christ's Church, appointed to celebrate the Praises of our Redeemer, to hear his Word, to receive his Holy Sacraments, and jointly to offer up our Prayers and Thanksgivings unto him: To neglect these, is a Degree of Apostacy and Defection from him, and therefore let us exhort one another to keep to them, and the rather, because the Day of Reckoning is at hand.

This is the Substance of this Day's Epistle, which affords many pious and excellent Meditations proper for *Good-Friday*; the digesting whereof will make it a *Good Friday* indeed, even the Cause of all our Good, and the Spring of all our Joy: for all Divine Blessings flow in to us from the Fountain of Christ's Blood, and his Grave is the sole Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations. Let us then, with Tears of Sorrow and Repentance, remember our Saviour's Passion; so shall we be the better fitted for the Joys and Triumphs of his Resurrection, and by keeping the Fast of *Good-Friday*, be prepar'd for the Feast of *Easter*: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LVI.

The GOSPEL for Good-Friday.

St. John xix. 1 ——— 38.

Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourg'd him; and the Soldiers platted a Crown of Thorns, and put it on his Head; and they put on him a Purple Robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their Hands, &c.

THE Harmony of the Four Evangelists is in nothing more plainly seen, than in their several Relations of Christ's Passion, wherein they all agree in the most material Passages and Circumstances of it; and it is therefore made the Subject of this Week's Meditations and Devotion.

The Account that St. *Matthew* gives of it was shew'd in the Gospel for the last Sunday: I shall briefly pass over what was there spoken to, and consider only what was omitted there, and added here.

The Gospel for this Day of his Death, is taken out of St. *John*, rather than out of any of the other Evangelists, because (as a Father hath observ'd) St. *John* was present at the Passion, and continu'd at our Saviour's Cross, standing by it, when the others fled: And therefore the Passion being, as it were, represented before our eyes this Day, the Church hath order'd his Testimony to be read, who saw it himself, that we may be the better confirm'd in it by an Eye-witness of the Truth of it, and learn, by his example, to be neither asham'd or afraid of the Cross of Christ.

The Gospel begins with the Part that *Pilate* acted in the Tragedy of Christ's Passion, who is said, *ver. 11. To take Jesus and scourge him*; which he did either to satisfy the Importunity of the People, by inflicting a lighter Punishment, and thereby seeking to release him; as St. *Luke* tells us, *Chap. 23. 16.* or he us'd Scourging as a prelimina-

ry Punishment, that was wont to go before Crucifixion : or else he scourg'd him, as some think, to get the whole Truth out of him, it being customary among the *Romans* to use Rods or Wands for free Persons, and Whips for Slaves to that purpose ; and Christ being in the form of a Servant, had this servile Punishment exercis'd upon him.

As for the *Soldiers* plating a *Crown of Thorns*, and setting it on his Head, and putting on him the *Purple Robe*, and arraying him in other Formalities of a Mock-King ; these things have been already spoken to.

Pilate therefore went forth to the People, and said unto them, *Behold I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him* ; meaning, that having scourg'd him, he could find nothing in him, that might deserve or require any farther Punishment ; at which words *Jesus* came forth, wearing his *Crown of Thorns* and *Purple Robe*. Pilate speaking to the People, said unto them, *Behold the Man, see there he is, what can you alledg against him ?* where he invites their Compassion, by an Appeal to his Innocence ; intimating, that he had suffer'd enough already for the Crimes they could object against him.

However, the *Chief Priests* and other Officers, without laying any thing to his charge, at the sight of him, cry'd out, *Crucify him, Crucify him*. To whom Pilate reply'd, *Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him* : that is, for his part he could see no reason for the doing of it, and therefore they must do it themselves, if they would have it done, for he would have no hand in it.

Whereupon the *Jews* fearing that the Favour of Pilate might procure his Release, began to charge him home, saying, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God* : the Punishment of Blasphemy being, by their Law, to be ston'd to death. Pilate hearing that Saying, was the more afraid ; partly of the Displeasure of the Emperor, by countenancing a Rival King, and partly of a greater Punishment from God, by condemning an innocent Person. In this strait he be-thought himself, and went again into the *Judgment-Hall* ; and summoning *Jesus* before him, saith unto him, *Whence art thou ?* that is, tell me truly, from whence is thy Stock and Extraction, that I may the better clear my self and thee ? But *Jesus* gave him no Answer. Pilate displeas'd at his Silence, after so much Kindness (as he thought) shew'd unto him, said to him, *Speakest thou not unto me ? Knowest*

thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Where he asks, why he refus'd to answer him, in whose power it was either to condemn or to acquit him. Jesus then broke his Silence, and said unto him, *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above, therefore he that deliver'd me unto thee hath the greater Sin:* meaning, that neither he nor any earthly Person whatsoever could have any power against him, had not his Father in Heaven, out of his infinite Wisdom and Counsels, delegated and permitted it to him for the Good of Mankind, designing by his Sufferings to work out and accomplish their Salvation. Christ wanted not either Right or Power to vindicate and rescue himself from the Malice and Injustice of all his Enemies; but he meekly submitted to the Will of his Father in both, to bring about his gracious and glorious Purposes. And tho *Pilate's Sin* might admit of some Mitigation, by his endeavouring his Release; yet *Judas*, who betray'd him, and the Chief Priests and others that deliver'd him to him, had a more heinous and inexcusable Guilt.

Pilate, more convinc'd by this Discourse of the Goodness and Greatness of our Saviour, and that he was not only an innocent but divine Person, *from thenceforth sought to release him:* but the *Jews* persisted in their Rage and Importunity against him, crying out, and saying, *If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's Friend; for whosoever maketh himself a King, speaketh against Cæsar: ver. 12.* Where they make the releasing our Saviour, no less than Treason and Conspiracy against the Emperor; and to be a Friend to Christ, was to be an Enemy to *Cæsar*.

When *Pilate* therefore heard that Saying, he began to fear the Displeasure of the Emperor, and that the setting him at liberty might endanger his own; and being unwilling to venture his own Life, by saving of his, brought *Jesus* forth, and sat down in the Judgment-Seat, in a Place that is call'd the Pavement, but in the Hebrew *Gabbatha*; an open Gallery on high, visible to all the People: And as he brought him forth before, with an *Ecce Homo!* Behold the Man! to invite their Compassion; so he here brought him forth again, with an *Ecce Rex vester!* Behold your King! to demand their Subjection: which was done at the Preparation of the Passover about the sixth Hour (the third, saith St. Mark) when there was wont to be a more than ordinary Concourse of the People; to see whether they would bear with

with his Release. But they still cried out, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him.* Pilate saith unto them, *shall I crucify your King?* Have you no more regard to your long-expected Messiah, who was promised to be your King, than to execute him as a Malefactor? *The chief Priests answer'd, We have no King but Cæsar.*

Pilate seeing he could prevail nothing, but that rather a Tumult was made, which he fear'd might tend to his own detriment, *deliver'd him up unto them to be crucify'd*; passing Sentence upon him, to do unto him as they would: and then they took Jesus and led him away, the Soldiers seizing and leading him to execution. As they went to the Place, they made him (as they that suffer'd that Punishment were wont) to bear his own Cross upon his Shoulders; till being weary and ready to faint under the Burden, they compell'd one Simon a Cyrenian to bear it for him. When they came to a Place call'd *Golgotha*, that is to say, the Place of a Skull, from the Repository of Skulls and dead Mens Bones that was there, they proceeded to crucify him, and made the Cross which he bore, to bear him.

And to make his Death the more infamous, he was *crucify'd with two Thieves, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst*; as if he had been the principal Malefactor. By which was fulfill'd that Prophecy of *Isaias*, *He was numbred with the Transgressors, and made his Grave with the Wicked*; Isa. 53. 12.

The Title or Inscription set over his Head, together with the several Languages in which it was written, hath been already spoken to; only St. John here farther observes, that the chief Priests of the Jews would have it alter'd, from his being King of the Jews, to his saying, That he was the King of the Jews: But Pilate would admit of no Alteration, but would have it stand as it was; saying, *What I have written, I have written.*

The Account here given of the Soldiers parting his Garments, and casting Lots upon his Vesture, is the same with that before mention'd in St. Matthew: only St. John here adds, that Christ's Coat was without Seam, woven all of one piece from the top throughout; ver. 23. to signify (as some have observ'd from it) that Christ's Church is but one, and so to be kept intire and united, without any Rent, Schism, or Division in it: and they that offer to tear it, cease to be of it.

All this while stood near the Cross the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of our Lord, with a Grief and Concern, no doubt, suitable to so sad an Occasion; and yet with a Silence and Resignation becoming so Holy a Mother, who, with *Abraham*, was ready to offer up her only Son at God's Call and Command, and was content to see him made a Sacrifice for the Salvation of Mankind. There were likewise with her her two Attendants, *Mary* the Wife of *Cleophas*, Sister-in-Law to the Holy Virgin; her Husband being Brother, or else she Sister to *Joseph*; her own Sister she was not, it being neither usual or convenient to call two Sisters by the same Name: there was also present *Mary Magdalen*, and *John* the beloved Disciple, who continu'd with our Saviour to the last Hour, when the rest deserted him. Here she and they that were with her, stood beholding, and hearing with heavy Hearts, what was said and done against her Son. Our Lord looking down from the Cross, saw his Mother and the Disciple whom he loved, standing by her; and speaking first to her, call'd her *Woman*, not Mother, lest she should suffer from the Multitude, for her near Relation to him; and then recommended her to the Care and Kindness of *John* his beloved Disciple, as to one that would thenceforward perform to her the Duty and Observance of a Son; saying to her by way of Consolation, *Woman, behold thy Son*; that is, see one that will supply the Place of a Son, and do all the good Offices that belong to that Relation. And then saith he to the Disciple, *Behold thy Mother*; that is, take the same care of her as if she were thine own Mother. And from that hour *John* took her to his own Home, as Children are wont to do to their aged Parents.

Our Blessed Saviour having thus made his Will, and dispos'd of his only Charge, his dear Mother, to his beloved Disciple, who took care of her, and supply'd her with all Necessaries till her Death; he then compos'd himself for the last Scene of his sufferings. To which end, *Jesus* knowing that all things were now accomplish'd; that is, that all the Prophecies concerning him, that were antecedent to his Death, were punctually fulfill'd, save one only mention'd by *David*, *Psal. 69. 22. They gave me Gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave me Vinegar to drink: that this Scripture likewise might be fulfilled, he saith, I thirst.* Knowing that his Enemies were ready enough to give him Gall and Vinegar, the most bitter and sourest Potion they could; for there was a Vessel set and prepar'd full of Vinegar for that purpose:

purpose : *and they filled a Sponge with the Vinegar, and put it upon Hyssop, and put it to his Mouth.* Where the Sponge was to bring the Vinegar to his Mouth, and the Hyssop to sprinkle it in his Face, according to the manner us'd to Sufferers in that case.

But when Jesus had received the Vinegar, the last Dregs of the bitter Cup prepared for him by his heavenly Father to drink, he utter'd those comfortable words to poor Sinners, saying, *It is finished :* meaning, that all the Predictions relating to his Life, and that were to go before his Death, were fully answer'd ; the Sacrifice was offer'd, and the Ransom of Mankind from the Wrath of God and Eternal Death fully paid ; and so the Work of Man's Redemption, as to all the Parts and Prophecies of it, exactly compleated.

After which, having no more to do, commending his Soul into the hands of his Heavenly Father, *He bowed his Head, and gave up the Ghost.* Thus ended our Lord's Passion, and thus the bloody Sacrifice was finish'd ; by which the Work of our Redemption was accomplish'd, and the Debt due to Divine Justice for our Sins, paid to the utmost Farthing.

After this, the next care was, how to dispose of his Body ; to which end, *The Jews, because it was the Preparation, that the Bodies should not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath-Day, which was a high Day with them, besought Pilate that their Legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.* There was a Law given to the Jews by God Almighty, that *if a Man have committed a Sin worthy of Death, and he be to be put to death and hang'd on a Tree, his Body shall not remain all Night upon the Tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that Day ; for he that is hanged, is accursed of God : that the Land be not defiled.* Deut. 21. 22, 23. Accordingly they besought Pilate for removing the Bodies of those executed Persons, which was not to be done but by the Permission of the Roman Magistrate : in which they were the more instant, because the next Day was their Sabbath-day. Pilate, at their Request, presently sent an order to the Soldiers to take away the Bodies of the Malefactors ; but first to break their Legs, lest there should be Life in them, and so being taken down, might make their Escape and run away. The Soldiers finding the two Thieves not dead, brake their Bones and took them down ; but coming to Jesus, and seeing that he was dead already, they spared him, and brake
not

not his Legs, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saying, *A Bone of him shall not be broken.* This was commanded and punctually observ'd in the Paschal Lamb, *Exod. 12. 46. Ye shall not break a Bone thereof:* and is apply'd by the Psalmist to our Saviour, the Lamb of God represented by it; saying, *Psal. 34. 20. A Bone of him shall not be broken:* which Prophecy was at this time actually fulfilled.

But tho the Soldiers, by the Divine Disposal, spar'd his Bones, yet *one of them* rudely, or wantonly thrust his Lance or Spear into his Flesh, and pierced his Side, and forthwith there came out Water and Blood: not naturally, as Wise-Men suppose, the piercing of a dead Body not affording so great a Stream of Blood and Water as then gush'd out; but miraculously and mysteriously, to signify the washing away of our Sins and Pollutions by the Blood of his Cross. Yea, the Fathers generally make the issuing of this Water and Blood out of our Saviour's Side, the Types and Emblems of the two Sacraments; the Water representing Baptism, and the Blood the Holy Eucharist; and both the purging away of our Guilt by the Sacrifice of himself, as they were formerly by the Blood of the Altar.

And this piercing his Side by the Soldier's Spear, was for the fulfilling of another Scripture; which saith, *They shall look upon him whom they pierc'd,* *Zech. 12. 10.* Accordingly, the Executioners of our Saviour pierc'd indeed his Sacred Body, but did not break a Bone, as the Predictions of the Prophets foretold. St. John was a Spectator of all this; for being present at the Passion, he diligently observ'd all that pass'd, and so became an Eye-witness to testify and record it, for the satisfaction of all future Ages. So himself tells us, *ver. 35. And he that saw it bare Record, and his Record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.*

Thus have we gone through the several Scenes of that direful Tragedy, that was acted on the Person of our Blessed Saviour, and shew'd the many Ingredients of that bitter Cup, which he took off, for the Health of Mankind. From whence many useful Lessons may be infer'd; I shall mention a few of them. As,

1st, From the Treachery of *Judas* in betraying, and the Injustice of *Pilate* in condemning our Lord, we may learn the great Danger and dismal Consequences of sinning wilfully

fully against the Light and Convictions of our own Conscience. Both of them acted against their own Knowledge, and both felt the bitter Remorse and severe Lashes of a guilty Mind. *Judas* being a Disciple, a Companion, and constant Attendant upon our Saviour, one that had been taught and sustain'd by him, could not but know the Baseness of betraying so good a Master; and yet for a few Pieces of Silver sold him into the hands of his Enemies. *Pilate* also, after many publick Declarations of our Saviour's Innocence, after the Warning of his Wife to have nothing to do with that just Man, and his frequent owning that he found no fault in him; was yet, by a sordid Compliance with the *Jews*, induc'd to release an infamous Robber, named *Barrabbas*, and to pass Sentence against Jesus to be crucify'd. But how did it fare with these two bloody Instruments of his Death? Why, *Judas's* Conscience awaken'd and flew in his face, fill'd him with Horror and Despair, and gave him no rest till he went out and hang'd himself. *Pilate* likewise, who by a cowardly Fear of *Cesar* was drawn into this unjust and vile Action, was soon after remov'd by him, and falling into Contempt, was harass'd and buffeted by the *Jews*, with whom he so basely comply'd: which may teach us to beware of offending God, and wounding our own Consciences by any wilful and deliberate Sin. For if we sin wilfully, after we have receiv'd the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries: Heb. 10. 26, 27.

2dly, From the fulfilling of all the Prophecies in Christ, and his finishing the Work of our Redemption by the Merits of his Passion, we may learn to hold fast the Profession of our Faith in him without wavering; not to stagger thro Unbelief, but to rely upon his all-sufficient Atonement, and by no means to let go our Faith or Hope in him. We read of some in the latter days, that would deny the Lord that bought them, drawing many from the Truth, and leading them into pernicious and damnable Errors: 'twere well if there were none of these in our days. But alas! Christ crucify'd is still a Stumbling-block to some, and a Laughing-stock to others; of whom therefore let us beware, as the Enemies of the Cross of Christ, who glory in their Shame, whose End is Destruction, and who will be the Ruin of all that are misled and deluded by them.

3dly, The Doctrine of Christ crucify'd should teach us to *crucify the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; to be dead to all the Allurements of sinful Pleasures, and with St. Paul to be crucify'd unto the World, and the World unto us.

Lastly, From Christ's Sufferings, let us learn patiently to bear whatever may befall us in his Cause; knowing, that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorify'd together: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LVII.

The EPISTLE for *Easter-Eve*.

I Pet. iii. 17, to the end.

It is better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing: For Christ also hath once suffer'd for Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the Flesh, but quicken'd by the Spirit, &c.

AFTER the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour, the Subject of this Holy Week's Meditations; the Church by an Evening-Service prepares us for his Resurrection. To which end, the Collect for the Day puts us in mind of our conforming to Christ's Death, by being baptiz'd into it; and likewise of our conforming to his Burial, by mortifying our corrupt Affections: of both which the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 6. 3, 4, 5*. From whence we are taught to pray, that we may pass thro the Grave or Gate of Death to a joyful Resurrection, for the Merits of Christ, who died, and was bury'd, and rose again for us.

Now our conforming to Christ's Death, is not only by dying unto Sin, but by partaking something of the Sufferings that are due to it. And because Men are more impatient, and apt to complain of unjust and undeserv'd Sufferings, than of any deserv'd Evils, which they justly bring upon themselves by their own faults; therefore the Epistle for

for the Day is made use of, to set us right in this matter, and to comfort us under the most extreme and unjust Sufferings; saying in the beginning,

That 'tis better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. Since it pleases God, that we must all bear a share in the Sufferings of this Life, it is far more desirable and profitable for us to suffer as innocent than as guilty Persons, for doing well than for ill doing; there being much more of Comfort, and less of Danger in the one than the other. If a Man suffer innocently without cause, or for Righteousness sake in a good Cause, there is no matter of Sorrow in that; for his own Conscience will acquit him of the Guilt, and God will reward him for the trouble he may undergo in it: so that he may rather rejoice than repine at such Afflictions, which are but light and momentary, in comparison of that exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory they work out for us, and bring us to. But there is neither Comfort nor Reward in just and deserved Punishments, for there Conscience condemns; and God, who is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things, will condemn also. So that such Sufferings are but the Beginning of Sorrows, and lead to far greater and more lasting Punishments. *What glory is it, saith St. Peter, if when ye are buffeted for your Faults ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* 1 Pet. 2. 20. 'Tis not the Manner or Measure, but the Cause of our Sufferings, that can give us any Comfort in them, or intitle us to the Reward of Martyrdom. If you suffer for doing your Duty and obeying the Will of God, you may rest assur'd, that he will stand by and support you, and amply recompense your Patience under it. But if you are justly punish'd for the Violation and Transgression of his Laws, you will find no Succour, but be left to sink under the sad effects of your own Guilt and Folly: *This is thank-worthy* (saith the same Apostle) *if a Man for Conscience towards God endure Grief, suffering wrongfully:* implying, that no Thanks or Reward is due, where the Punishments are just, or legally inflicted for the Demerit of their Crimes. Which made him ask the Question, *Who is he that will harm you, if you are Followers of that which is good?* But if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled at such Trials. And therefore the Apostle gives this good Caution to all Christians, Chap. 4. 15, &c. *Let*

none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Busy-body in other Mens matters; yet if any Man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. St. Paul was so far from being ashamed, that he glory'd in the Cross; and the Apostles rejoic'd, that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ. St. James bids us count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations; knowing, if they are borne with Patience and Perseverance in well-doing, they will tend to our greater Good, and yield the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness to them that are exercis'd therewith.

All which may abundantly confirm the Truth of what is here told us, that *'tis better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing*: the one being attended with the Testimony of a good Conscience here, and with a much greater Reward hereafter in Heaven; the other drawing on all the Miseries both of this Life and the next. And therefore to encourage us in this Patience and Perseverance in well-doing,

The Apostle, in the next words, adds a good Reason or Motive thereunto, taken from the Example of Christ himself; *For Christ also hath once suffer'd for Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us unto God*: meaning, that Christ hath left us a Pattern of Patience under unjust Sufferings; for tho he had no Sin, neither was any Guile found in his mouth, yea, tho he was Innocence it self, and a Lamb without blemish and without spot, yet was he barbarously treated as a Malefactor, and bore the Sins of many; the Punishment whereof he underwent with an invincible Patience, and Resignation of himself unto God. *He was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter* (saith the Prophet) *and as the Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, so he open'd not his Mouth.* When he was reviled (saith the Apostle) *he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*: bearing our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead unto Sin, should live unto Righteousness, by whose Stripes we are heal'd. Thus *the Just suffer'd for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God*: that is, reconcile us to him, who were Enemies to him by wicked Works, and to give us an Entrance into his glorious Presence; thereby bringing us nigh by the Blood of his Cross, who were before afar off and alienated from him: which happy Effect should reconcile us to Sufferings, by which alone this great Work was accomplish'd.

This

This is the Design of this Day's Epistle, to make us conformable to Christ, as well in his Sufferings as in his Glory: *For hereunto were ye call'd* (saith our Apostle) *because Christ also suffer'd for us; leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps.* To this he hath call'd us both by his Precept and his Pattern, and hath gone every step of our way before us; which we are therefore chearfully to follow without Murmuring or Impatience: he having tasted and felt the Bitterness of God's Wrath for our Sins, we may not grudge to taste of that bitter Cup, which he hath taken off to the very dregs; and having borne the Heat and Burden of the Day for us, let us not droop or faint under a few easy and gentle Afflictions.

But to encourage us to this Conformity with Christ in his Death, the Apostle tells us in the next words, that that Body of his that thus died for us, was rais'd again by the Divine Power; *Being put to death in the Flesh, he was quicken'd by the Spirit.* And we being planted together in the Likeness of his Death, shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection; being predestinated to be conform'd to the Image of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many Brethren, *Rom. 8. 29.* Now this Resurrection of Christ was effected by the Virtue of his Divine Nature, call'd here *the Spirit*; according to that of St. Paul, *Rom. 1. 4. He was declar'd to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead; said therefore to be justify'd by the Spirit, 1 Tim. 3. 16.* By this Spirit he is farther said,

To preach to the Spirits in Prison, which were sometime disobedient, when the Long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight Souls, were saved by Water. This difficult and obscure Text hath exercis'd the Wits and Pens of many, who have given divers and sundry Interpretations of it, with which I shall not trouble you, taking the true Sense and Meaning of it to be plainly this: That Christ, who in the Fulness of Time was manifest in the Flesh, appear'd long before by his Holy Spirit, even in the time of the Old World, when he inspir'd Noah the Preacher of Righteousness, to warn and call them to Repentance, to prevent the Ruin that would otherwise come upon them; his Spirit striving with the Men of those times, whose Souls are now in the infernal Regions, as it were imprison'd and reserv'd there to the Judgment of the great Day, for being disobedient

and deaf to all Calls to Amendment, and wilfully persisting in their Wickedness against all Warnings and Admonitions to the contrary. In a word, when they had abus'd his Patience and Goodness, which had a long time waited for them, while the Ark was preparing, he then resolv'd that his Spirit should no longer strive with them; and so swept them all away with a Flood, save *Noah* and his Family, who were preserv'd in the Ark from the general Deluge that drown'd and overwhelm'd all the rest, as we read in the Book of *Genesis*, and in 2 *Pet.* 2. 4, 5. This was Christ's Preaching by his Spirit to the Spirits in Prison, and this is here alledg'd as an Example, how much better it is to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; the old World being drown'd for their Wickedness, and *Noah* with his Family sav'd for his Righteousness from perishing by Water.

Which Deliverance of *Noah* from the general Deluge, is here made a Type of our Salvation in the Ark of the Church by the Waters of Baptism; so the next words tell us, *The like Figure whereunto, even Baptism, doth also now save us, not by the putting away the Filth of the Flesh, but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*: that is, as Water bore up the Ark wherein *Noah* and his Family were sav'd from perishing by it; so the Waters of Baptism now preserve us in the Ark of Christ's Church from sinking into the Gulph of Perdition. But yet,

The Efficacy of this Sacrament of Baptism proceeds not from any outward cleansing of the Flesh, or the washing away the Pollution of the Body, but from the inward cleansing of the Soul, and washing that from all Impurity; 'tis by the *Laver of Regeneration and the Renewing of the Holy Ghost*, by which the Conscience is purify'd from Guilt, and can answer for us before God. Which things are said to be accomplish'd for us by the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*; meaning, that the Efficacy of this Sacrament is confirm'd and assur'd to us by our Lord's rising again from the Dead: for as *he died for our Sins, so he rose again for our Justification*. He as our Surety was made a Prisoner in the Grave for our Debts, and could not be releas'd from thence without making full Satisfaction. Now his Resurrection from the Dead is a plain Evidence, that our Debt is paid, and the Sins for which he died were fully expiated. His Release is a Token of our Discharge; which made the Apostle boldly say, *Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect?* it

is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, Rom. 8. And St. Peter tells us, that we are begotten again in Baptism unto a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead. The Mercies of our Salvation depend upon the Merits of his Death, and are deriv'd upon us by the Virtue of his Resurrection; they were purchas'd by the one, and apply'd to us by the other: and from both we have a firm Foundation for our Faith in him, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us.

To which the Apostle adds the farther Steps and Degrees of his Exaltation, as the Grounds of our greater Confidence in him, who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God; Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made subject to him: meaning, that Christ by his ascending up into Heaven, and sitting at the Right Hand of God, hath obtain'd a compleat Victory over his and our Enemies, and made all his Foes his Footstool. He hath all Power given him both in Heaven and Earth, by which all the Orders of Angels, distinguish'd here by *Authorities and Powers*, and elsewhere by *Thrones and Dominions*, are all put in Subjection to him.

Thus I have briefly given you the Sense and Substance of this Day's Epistle; from which we may learn,

1. To confirm our Minds in the Truth of Christ's Death. The Death and Resurrection of our Saviour are the two main Props and Pillars of the Christian Faith, and therefore we are to be establish'd and firmly built up in the Belief of them; for if Christ had not died and risen again, we are yet in our Sins; neither is the Body quicken'd except it die: so that we must be steadfast in the Faith of both, if we expect to receive the Benefit of either. 'Tis from his Death that we must look for eternal Life; and his rising from the Grave, is the sole Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations.

2. We may learn from this Discourse to conform to his Death by dying unto Sin, and to his Resurrection by rising again to Newness of Life. These are the declared Ends of both, and the Use the Apostle would have us to make of them: for the Design of his Death was to mortify our corrupt Affections, and the End of his Resurrection to quicken us to a Life of Righteousness; as we shall shew more at large hereafter.

3. From this Discourse we may learn Patience under the greatest Sufferings in a good Cause, and Perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding any Difficulties we may meet with in it: for *blessed are they, that are persecuted for Righteousness sake; for great is their Reward in Heaven.* We may not indeed run rashly into Temptation, nor draw unnecessary Troubles and Sufferings upon us by our own Imprudence and Folly; for Christ hath willed us to be wise as Serpents, to foresee and prevent Evils, and to flee from one place to another to avoid Persecution: but still he bids us to be harmless as Doves, to preserve our Integrity at all times and in all cases, and to decline no Sufferings to keep a good Conscience. These things Christ hath taught us both by his Precept and Example, and encourag'd us with the Promise of an ample Recompence for any thing we lose or suffer in his Cause. And being made conformable to him in the Likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LVIII.

The GOSPEL for Easter-Eve.

St. Matthew xxvii. 57, to the end.

When the Even was come, there came a rich Man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus's Disciple; he went to Pilate, and begged the Body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the Body to be deliver'd; and when Joseph had taken the Body, he wrapped it in a clean Linen Cloth, and laid it in his own Tomb, &c.

THE Epistle for this Day minded us of Christ's Death, and our Conformity thereunto, by dying unto Sin, represented to us in the Sacrament of Baptism; of which before.

The Gospel for the Day gives us a Relation of his Burial, with the Circumstances that attended it: of which I am
now

now to speak. After Death follows Burial, and both go before a Resurrection: for as the Body is not quicken'd except it die, and the Seed must be buried in the Earth before it can rise again; so must we be dead and bury'd with Christ, before we can be rais'd with him. The Relation of his Burial begins thus; *When the Even was come*: that shews us the time of this great Action, which was in the Evening of the Day of his Crucifixion; when the dead Body had remain'd all the Day upon the Cross, then towards the Even they thought of taking it down and burying it. To which end, one *Joseph of Arimathea* took upon him the Care of his Interment. He was a Person of Quality, and of no small Interest in his Country; describ'd here,

1st, By the Place of his Birth, which was *Arimathea*, a City of the *Jews*, the Place where the Prophet *Samuel* was born and brought up; called by the *Hebrews Ramatheim*, by the *Greeks* *Agma Saim*: by which he is distinguish'd from *Joseph* the reputed Father of our Saviour.

2^{dly}, He is describ'd by his Wealth and Substance, called here *a rich Man of Arimathea*; which gives him a Figure and Reputation in the World.

3^{dly}, He is describ'd elsewhere by his Profession and honourable Station in his Country, for *St. Mark* styles him *an honourable Counsellor*, *Mark* 15. 43. meaning, that he was a Member of the *Sanhedrim*, or great Council at *Jerusalem*, which consisted of Persons of the greatest note, both for Wealth and Wisdom among the *Jews*.

Again, 4^{thly}, *St. Luke* gives him the Character of *a good Man and a just*, famed for his Integrity, and *one that consented not to the Counsel and Deeds of them that persecuted and crucify'd our Saviour*, *Luke* 18. 50, 51.

Lastly, He is said to be *himself one of Jesus's Disciples*, and *one that waited for the Kingdom of God*; though (as *St. John* tells us) he carried it secretly for fear of the *Jews*, *John* 19. 38.

This great and honourable Person, who by his Quality and Station had an easy access to *Pilate*, came to him and begg'd the Body of *Jesus*; *St. Mark* expresses it, that he went boldly unto *Pilate*, and craved the Body of *Jesus*: However that be, *Pilate* denied him not, but commanded the Body to be deliver'd. The Design of *Joseph* herein, was to pay a due respect to the Body of our Lord, to rescue it from the contemptuous Usage of common Malefactors, and to give it a decent Burial.

Accordingly,

Accordingly, *When Joseph had taken the Body, he wrapp'd it in a clean Linen Cloth, such as they us'd to wrap up dead Bodies in, and perform'd all the usual Solemnities to it upon that occasion. Moreover,*

Nicodemus, another great Person, and one that had convers'd much with our Saviour by Night, and was likewise one of his Disciples, tho he would not openly shew it for fear of the Jews, and probably one of Joseph's familiar Acquaintance, upon the account of their Discipleship; he, I say, join'd with him in this Service, and brought a great quantity of Spices (St. John reckons it to a hundred pound weight) to embalm the Body, thinking, as the Custom then was, thereby to preserve it from Corruption. When they had perform'd these and other usual Ceremonies to his dead Body, by washing, anointing, and embalming it with Spices, wrapping it in fine Linen, and binding his Face about with a Napkin, Joseph laid it in his own Tomb, which he had hewn out in a Rock; and he roll'd a great Stone to the Door of the Sepulchre, and departed. This was a new Tomb, describ'd by St. Luke to be such a one, as wherein never Man before had laid; it was with great Care and Cost hewn out of a Rock by Joseph, and design'd by him as a Burying-Place for himself and Family. Indeed the Fathers, both in antient and latter times, have been very careful and curious in burying their Dead, and especially in preparing Places and Tombs for that purpose. It hath been the Desire of many to sleep with their Fathers, to lie among those of their own Family, and to have their Bones and Relicks deposited with their own Kindred: it hath been ever reckon'd a great Punishment to be depriv'd of Christian Burial, and a great Misfortune to lie at a distance from our own Relations; and therefore some have been at no small Expence in purchasing Ground, that they may lie together. We read of Abraham's buying a Field of the Children of Heth for this purpose, Gen. 23. and many have purchas'd Ground for convenient Repositories for themselves, and those that belong to them, and have appropriated Sepulchres for their Persons and Families: So did Joseph here, who hew'd out a Tomb in a Rock, that it might be the more durable; and to shew his Respects to our Saviour, deposited his Body there, where he design'd to lay his own; and to make it the more firm and safe, roll'd a great Stone to the Door of the Sepulchre.

Thus

Thus was the Body of our Lord honourably entomb'd, and his Remains decently inter'd, with all the solemn Rites of Burial. To this some have apply'd that Prophecy of *Isaiah*, chap. 11. 10. where 'tis said, that *his Rest should be glorious*; understanding thereby, that his Sepulchre, or Resting-Place, should be attended with Honour and Glory, as it was by those two honourable Persons that took the Care and Management of it: which things were observ'd, and with great Joy and Thankfulness remark'd by *Mary Magdalen*, and the other *Mary*, sitting over against the Sepulchre, who no doubt approv'd and assisted in all the good Offices done to his sacred Body.

Herein also were fulfil'd two other Prophecies mention'd by *Isaiah*: the one, that he *was to be number'd among the Transgressors*, which was fulfil'd, in his being crucify'd between two Thieves, as if he had been the Arch-Malefactor; the other, that he *was to make his Grave with the Rich in his Death*, which was fulfil'd, in his being bury'd in the Tomb of *Joseph of Arimathea*, a rich and honourable Counsellor: both which Prophecies are extant in *Isa. 53. 9, 12.* and were both accomplish'd in the Person of Christ; which may abundantly confirm our Faith in him.

But how came our Saviour to have the Favour of a Burial, when they, who suffer'd on the cursed Tree, were not wont to be admitted to it, but were, by the *Roman Laws*, to have their Bodies remain on the Cross, till they were either devour'd by the Fowls of the Air, or consum'd by the Injuries of the Wind or Weather? Why, this was obtain'd partly by the Intercession of a Great Man, whose Interest in the *Roman Governor* prevail'd with him for the taking down and interring his Body, and partly by the Request of the *Jews*, whose Laws requir'd that they who were put to death by hanging on a Tree, should not remain all Night upon the Tree, but should in any wise be taken down and bury'd the same day: *Deut. 21. 22.* By which means they who clamour'd for his Death, did likewise petition for his Burial; as we read, *John 19. 31.*

Thus the Divine Providence, by its infinite Wisdom, order'd all things for the Completion of the Prophecies, and the accomplishing the Work of Man's Redemption. And now the Body of our Lord, after a solemn and sumptuous Funeral, was at rest; but the Consciences of his Enemies and Accusers were not so: for they were fill'd with Fears and Jealousies of his rising again, and doubted what

what the end of these things would be. The *Jews* and the *Romans* both concur'd in his Death, and consented to his Burial; and both conspir'd by all possible means to prevent and hinder his Resurrection: for the next words tell us, that *the Day following the Day of the Preparation* (that is, the Sabbath-Day, the Day before it being call'd the Day of the Preparation, which was probably the Evening of the Friday on which he suffer'd about that time) *The Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three Days I will rise again.* Where, in their Consult with *Pilate*, they stick not to call our Saviour a *Deceiver*, tho both his Doctrine and Miracles plainly prov'd him the true *Messias*, and that he was a Teacher come from God, and was no otherwise a *Deceiver*, than in deceiving them of their vain Expectations of Pomp and Preferment from him, who came upon wiser and better Errands: upon which account *St. Paul* afterward stil'd his Disciples *Deceivers, and yet true*; 2 Cor. 6. 8. But their main Business was to let *Pilate* know, that this *Deceiver* (as they call'd him) said, that *after three Days he would rise again.* This indeed he had often told them, as he well enough might, and had they understood the Prophecies, might easily believe: for when they ask'd of him a Sign more than once, he alledg'd to them that of *Jonas*, Mat. 12. 38. & 16. 4. saying to them, that as *Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so should the Son of Man be three Days in the Heart of the Earth, and then be yielded up again.*

Moreover, he bid them once and again to *destroy this Temple, meaning the Temple of his Body, and in three Days he would raise it up again.* These, and many like Expressions of his, coming to their Minds, they address again unto *Pilate*, to command that the Sepulchre be made sure until the third Day, lest his Disciples come by Night, and steal him away, and say unto the People, *He is risen from the Dead; so the last Error shall be worse than the first.* They had, it seems, some Doubts and Fears of the Truth of what he had told them, and suspected the Event of his Predictions; they remembred what he had said, of their *shortly seeing him sitting on the right Hand of Power*; they saw what great Respects were shewn to his dead Body by two eminent Persons, which they conceiv'd were grounded upon those Hopes, and perform'd upon some such Expectations; and

and therefore they renew their Request to *Pilate*, to make all things sure, by setting a Watch about the Sepulchre till the third Day, to prevent the taking or carrying away the Body by Night, and thereby imposing upon the World with a Pretence of his Resurrection; which may prove a more fatal and dangerous Error than we at present apprehend.

To this their earnest and importunate Suit, *Pilate* answer'd and said unto them, *Ye have a Watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can.* They had a Guard of Roman Soldiers to stand Centinel at the Grave, to secure the Body from any false play that might be us'd about it. The Governor finding them possess'd with great Fears and Jealousies in this Affair, gave them sufficient Strength to hinder the taking or carrying away the Body, leaving the Matter wholly to their own ordering, and willing them to make all things as secure as they could: whereupon they went immediately to the Grave, and made the Sepulchre sure, sealing the Stone, and setting a Watch. To make all things safe, they rolled a great Stone at the Door of the Sepulchre, which some of the Antients tell us was fasten'd with Iron, and likewise had a Seal upon it, that they might discern if it were open'd; for the taking away of the Body must make a Breach in the Seal, and so the Theft would be discover'd: And, lastly, to keep all safe, a Guard of Soldiers was appointed to watch both the Stone and Sepulchre.

This is the Sum of this Day's Gospel, which gives us an Account of our Saviour's Burial, as a Preparation to his Resurrection; which, notwithstanding all this care to prevent it, came to pass soon after, according to the time he had appointed: yea, all the Diligence they us'd to hide and hinder this Matter, was, by the Divine Providence, turn'd to Ends quite contrary to their Intentions; and instead of preventing, became the strongest Proof of his Resurrection, of which this very Guard were the first Witnesses: for when the Angel had roll'd away the Stone from the Sepulchre, and declar'd his Resurrection to the Women, shewing them the empty Sepulchre, or the Place where the Lord lay; as they were going into the City to acquaint his Disciples, Behold, some of the Watch came into the City, and shew'd unto the Chief Priests all the things that were done; tho they corrupted them with a large Sum of Mony,

Mony, bribing them to say, *His Disciples came by Night, and stole him away, while they slept*: which Corruption or Bribery of the Soldiers, is a thing known and reported among the *Jews* until this Day, as we read at large in the next Chapter. Now,

1. From this Discourse of Christ's Burial, we may learn the Certainty of his Death, and the Truth of his Resurrection: for Men are not wont to bury any before they are dead, nor may any be said to rise again, unless they be bury'd. *Pilate* therefore strictly enquir'd into the Death of our Saviour, and *how long he had been dead*, before he would consent to the Delivery of his Body to be bury'd: And the Band of Soldiers, that stood Centinel at his Grave, affirming to the Chief Priests and Elders, that his Body was gone they knew not how, plainly shew'd him to be risen again; the great care they took in securing the Sepulchre, adding much to the Truth of their Testimony. The Story of the Disciples stealing away the Body by Night, while they slept, having not the least Colour or Foundation of Truth, since the Disciples themselves neither knew nor believ'd that he was alive, till he actually appear'd to them; after which they became the Witnesses of it every where.

2. The Solemnities us'd about the Burial of our Saviour's Body, may teach us all due Care for the decent Interment of the Dead. This hath been observ'd by Men of all Nations, in all Times and Places; and is continu'd with all decent Rites and Ceremonies to this Day.

Lastly, Let us conform to Christ's Burial, by being bury'd with him in Baptism, that the Body of Sin may be destroy'd. This Use the Apostle makes of it; *Rom. 6. 4. Therefore we are bury'd with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was rais'd up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk before him in Newness of Life.* And being thus dead and bury'd with him, we shall, e'er long, rise with him to a Life immortal: which God grant, for the Merits of him who liv'd and dy'd, and was bury'd, and rose again for us. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE LIX.

Easter-Day.

1 Cor. v. part of the 7th and 8th Ver.

Christ our Passover is sacrific'd for us: Therefore let us keep the Feast, not with the old Leaven, neither with the Leaven of Malice and Wickedness, but with the unleaven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth.

THES E words begin the Service appointed for this great Festival of *Easter*, wherein we commemorate the Death and Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour, the two great Props and Pillars of the Christian Faith, and the Foundation of all our Hopes and Expectations: for if Christ had not dy'd, we had been still dead in our Sins; and if he had not risen to Life again, we could have had no Hope of another and better Life; but now by both these he hath destroy'd Death, and intitled us to Life everlasting.

In memory of which great things, a Holy Feast is appointed by Christ himself, which we are here call'd upon to celebrate, saying, *Christ our Passover is sacrific'd for us, therefore let us keep the Feast, not with the old Leaven, &c.* In which words we may observe,

First, Something affirm'd, viz. *That Christ our Passover is sacrific'd for us.* And,

Secondly, Something infer'd from it, *Therefore let us keep the Feast.*

Thirdly, The right way and manner of keeping it, express'd, (1.) Negatively, *Not with the old Leaven, nor with the Leaven of Malice and Wickedness.* And, (2.) Positively, *But with the unleaven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth.* Of each of these particularly, as the occasion of the Festival requires. And,

First,

First, Of the great thing here affirm'd, and that is, *That Christ our Passover is sacrific'd for us.* Where two things will be necessary to be spoken to :

1st, In what sense Christ is said to be *our Passover.* And,
2ly, How he is said to be *sacrific'd for us.* For the

1st, We read in Scripture of a twofold Passover : the one under the Law, call'd the *Jewish Passover* ; the other under the Gospel, call'd the *Christian Passover* : the former being a Type or mystical Representation of the latter.

The *Jewish Passover* was a Lamb slain, and eaten in memory of God's passing over the Houses of the *Israelites*, when he slew all the First-born of the *Egyptians*. Of this we read *Exod. 12.* throughout the Chapter, where we find God Almighty declaring, that he would pass that Night through the Land of *Egypt*, and would smite all the First-born, both of Man and Beast, with the Pestilence, and would sprinkle their Blood as a Token, upon the Houses where the *Israelites* were ; and when he saw the Blood, he would pass over their Houses, and not destroy them with the Plague, with which he would smite all the Land of *Egypt*. Now God's causing the destroying Angel to pass over the Houses of the *Israelites*, and to spare them when he destroy'd all the First-born of the *Egyptians*, is what is said to be the *Jewish Passover*, call'd in that Chapter, *The Lord's Passover*, ver. 11. In which there was likewise a passing over or out of the Land of *Egypt*, that House of Misery and Bondage, into *Canaan* the Land of Promise ; and that too by the *Israelites* passing over the *Red Sea*, which *Pharaoh* and his Host attempting to do, were all overwhelm'd in the Waters ; the former pass'd it over well, when the latter perish'd in it : Which things are attributed to the Faith of *Moses* and the *Israelites*, *Heb. 11.* where we read, that *thro Faith Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of Blood, lest he that destroy'd the First-born should touch them* : And by *Faith the Israelites pass'd thorow the Red-Sea, as by dry Land, which the Egyptians essaying to do, were all drown'd* : ver. 28, 29. This is briefly the *Jewish Passover*, which was kept by killing and eating the *Paschal Lamb*, mention'd in *Exod. 12.*

The *Christian Passover*, of which the former was but a Type, is Christ's causing the Destroyer to pass over his People, and by sprinkling them with his Blood, freeing them from the Plague and Punishment of Sin, which the
 Wicked

Wicked are suffer'd to groan and perish under. For which reason Christ is stil'd in the Text, *Our Passover*; he being the very Paschal Lamb usher'd in by St. John, with this saying, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World.* In a word, Christ is the Substance of what the Jewish Passover was but a Shadow, having made the Wrath of God to pass over us, and perform'd all that which the legal Sacraments and Ceremonies did but typify and represent: For *the Law was but a Shadow of good things to come, but the Substance was Christ, who hath wrought out Eternal Redemption for us.* Egypt was a Type of this World, and Canaan of Heaven, the true Land of Promise: and the *Israelites* passing out of *Egypt* into the Land of *Canaan*, represented our passing over this Vale of Misery and Trouble into Heaven, the Place of endless Rest and Happiness. Moreover, the *Red Sea* was a Type of Death, which swallows up Mankind, as it were, in a Sea of Blood; all must pass it, some pass it well, but the most part perish in it. Now

Christ's giving us a safe Passage from Death to Life, from the Plague and Punishment of Sin to the Merits and Purchase of his Blood, is what is commonly stil'd the Christian Passover. And Christ being the Author of this Salvation, by opening our Passage to it by his Death and Resurrection, is justly said to be *our Passover*. But,

2dly, How is he said to *be sacrificed for us*? Why, Sacrifice we know is the offering up or doing something in the stead, and by way of Satisfaction for another. Thus in the Legal Sacrifices, which were but so many Types and Shadows of the great Atonement, to be after made by our Saviour, there was a killing of Beasts, or offering up of something in the room of the Offender; the Death and Punishment whereof was, in order to the Release of the offending Party.

But because the Blood of Bulls and Goats had not value enough in it, to satisfy for the Sins of Mankind; therefore Christ, the Son of God, as our Surety, put himself in the room of sinful Flesh, and his Death and Sufferings by the Dignity of his Person, and the invaluable Price of his Blood, was a sufficient Compensation for the Sins of the whole World; and as such, is accepted in the behalf of all penitent Christians, as a Release from the Obligation to eternal Punishments due to them. So St. *Matthew* tells us, *He gave his Life a Ransom for many*, Chap. 20. 28. He gave his Life in exchange for ours, and made the laying

down of his in our stead, the Price of our Redemption. To the same purpose speaks *St. Paul, Tit. 2. 14. He gave himself to redeem us from all Iniquity*; that is, from the Power and Punishment of it. And the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *he died for the Redemption of Transgressions*, and to procure for *us the Promise of Eternal Life*, Chap. 9. 15. Thus having made his Soul an Offering for Sin, and laid down his Life to save ours, he is truly said to be *sacrificed for us*. And tho the Legal Sacrifices, by reason of their Imperfection, were to be often renewed and reiterated every Year; yet Christ, by one Oblation of himself once offer'd, hath made a full, perfect, and all-sufficient Sacrifice and Satisfaction for the Sins of Mankind: so that there needs *no more offering for Sin*, having by one meritorious Sacrifice and Oblation of himself, *perfected for ever them that are sanctified*; as we read, *Heb. 9. 26. and Chap. 10.* By which we see the Truth of what is here affirm'd, that *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*. From whence,

Secondly, I proceed, in the next place, to what is infer'd from it, in these words; *Therefore let us keep the Feast.* Feasts and Festival Solemnities have been ever thought the most proper way of celebrating any memorable Mercies and Deliverances, as the Histories of all Times and Countries may inform us.

But what is the Feast here refer'd to, which we are call'd upon to keep? In answer to that we must note, that there was a Feast appointed under the Law, to celebrate the *Jewish Passover*: and there is likewise a Feast appointed under the Gospel, to celebrate the *Christian Passover*. For the

1st, We find a Feast ordain'd by God himself, in memory of the *Jewish Passover*, *Exod. 12. 14.* where speaking of the destroying Angel's passing over the Houses of the *Israelites*, he saith, *This Day shall be to you a Memorial, and you shall keep it a Feast unto the Lord throughout your Generations; you shall keep it a Feast by an Ordinance for ever.* At this Feast every one was to come and offer a *Lamb*, and the Lamb to be *without Blemish or Spot, and a Male of the first Year*; as we read in the fourth and fifth Verses of that Chapter. This Feast continu'd among the *Jews*, home to the Days of our Saviour, who for some time observ'd and kept it with them, as we read *Mat. 26. 17, 18.* and in many other places. But in the Evening in which Christ was betray'd, and his Death

Death and Sufferings drew on, he appointed another Feast in the room of the Passover; and instead of the Lamb that was to be offer'd at the Passover, Christ who was the true Paschal Lamb, offer'd up himself as a Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind; thereby fulfilling what *St. John* foretold of him, in styling him *the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World*. In token whereof, he, a little before his Death, chang'd this *Jewish* Feast of the Passover,

2dly, Into the Gospel Feast of the Lord's Supper, which he commanded his Disciples to keep in Remembrance of him, and to continue so to do until his coming again. Then it was that the Passover, which was but a Type hereof, ceas'd, and gave place to this Holy Sacrament. And this is the Feast that we are now call'd upon to keep in Memory, that *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us*. And this great Festival of *Easter* is the principal time when this sacred Feast is to be kept and celebrated: For then he passed from Death to Life, and was both his own and our Passover, by making a Way from the Grave passable for us by his Resurrection. He was indeed our Passover on *Good-Friday*, by his passing from Life to Death for our Sins; and that is to be kept rather as a Fast than a Feast, in memory of his bitter Death and Passion, and our great Guilt that occasion'd it. But he is now our Passover on *Easter* in a better Sense, by his passing from Death to Life again, to lead us the Way. And this ought to be kept as a joyful Feast indeed, *A Day which the Lord himself hath made, and therefore we ought to rejoice and be glad in it*. For on this Day he conquer'd Death, and triumph'd over all the Powers of Hell and Darkness: by this he hath made the Destroyer pass over us, or rather, he hath *destroyed him that had the Power of Death, which is the Devil*; Heb. 2. 14, 15. By his Resurrection, he hath made the *Red-Sea* of Blood passable for us, and hath translated us from a temporal Death to an eternal Life. For a Memorial whereof, he hath instituted the Holy Feast of the Eucharist to be yearly celebrated with a spiritual Joy, and Rejoicing in God our Saviour.

This sacred Feast may not be neglected on this Day, by any who stile themselves the Servants and Followers of Christ, for whose sake it was principally instituted and intended; nor at any other times when the Church requires it to be remember'd, in order to the receiving the Benefits of it. We find the Apostles strictly observ'd it on the Day of Christ's Resurrection, by breaking of Bread and

Prayer ; which occasion'd the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first Day of the Week, which hath been kept as the Lord's Day ever since.

But beside the weekly Remembrance of it on the Lord's Day, the Primitive Christians appointed the yearly Festival of *Easter* for its more solemn Commemoration ; fixing it, as near as they could, upon the annual Return of the Day of his Resurrection : And tho a great Controversy arose afterward, about the time of keeping this Festival of *Easter*, yet they all generally agreed that such a Feast was to be kept, albeit they differ'd about the time of observing it. But that being since determin'd by Councils, and now settled by the long Practice and Custom of the Church, we are this Day to keep this Holy Feast, and to draw nigh to the Holy Table of our Lord, to remember and receive the Blessings convey'd on it.

Thirdly, But how are we to keep this Feast ? why that the last words of the Text will tell us, *viz. Not with the Old Leaven, nor with the Leaven of Malice and Wickedness, but with the unleaven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth.* Where the Apostle refers to the Manner of keeping the Jewish Passover, which was with *unleaven'd Bread* ; and for seven Days there was no Leaven to be found in their Houses, upon pain of being cut off from Israel ; *Exod. 12. 15.* In allusion to this, the Apostle bids us to *purge out the Old Leaven, that we may be a new Lump, as we are unleaven'd.* Where by Old Leaven, is meant a former vicious and sinful Course of Life ; and particularly the Leaven of Malice and Wickedness, which are apt to swell and sour Mens Minds against one another, and are therefore to be cast out of our Hearts, as things that utterly unfit us for this holy Feast of Love and Charity. To come preparedly to it, we must purge out the Leaven of Pride, which puffs up ; the Leaven of Malice that imbitters the Mind, and the Leaven of Hypocrisy, which makes Men all Show and no Substance. Our Saviour bids us *beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees*, who were leaven'd all over : They had it in their Face, which made them look sour ; they had it in their Tongue, which made them speak great swelling Words of Vanity ; they had it in their Doctrine, which made it smell rank of Superstition and Corruption. Now the Apostle would have all this Leaven of corrupt Doctrine and Manners purg'd out, together with the Leaven of ill Company, that corrupts and

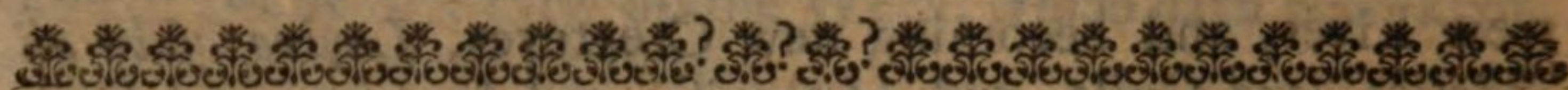
and ferments many ; that we may be a new Lump, leading new Lives, and becoming new Creatures, *Laying aside all Malice, and Guile, and Hypocrisy, and Envy, and Evil-speaking ; and as new-born Babes, desiring the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby.*

Come then we must to this heavenly Feast, but with Souls purg'd of all ill Humours that may hurt the Appetite, or hinder the Digestion of this spiritual Food. We must empty our Hearts of all Malice and Ill-will to any Person, and be in perfect Charity with all Men. This is to purge out the old Leaven, and to rid our Souls of all Malice and Wickedness.

Lastly, We must *keep the Feast with the unleaven'd Bread of Sincerity and Truth* ; that is, with pure and upright Hearts, full of true sincere Love to God and our Brethren, with a lively Faith in God's Mercy, and with full Purposes of Repentance and Amendment of Life ; joining together in one Fellowship and Communion, and maintaining Brotherly Love among our selves.

Wherefore let us all draw nigh to that Holy Table, where Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and a Feast is prepar'd in remembrance of it. The *Jews* were strictly commanded to eat the Passover, to teach it to their Children, and command them to observe it ; and if they ask'd the meaning of it, they were to say, it was the Sacrifice of the Lord's Passover : And they that refus'd to eat thereof, were to be cut off from *Israel*. And sure the Neglect or Contempt of the Lord's Supper, of which the other was but a Type or Shadow, will meet with a sorer and severer Punishment ; this being a trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing.





DISCOURSE LX.

Rom. vi. 9, 10, 11.

Knowing that Christ being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more, Death hath no more Dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead indeed unto Sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THIS is the second Sentence selected out of Holy Scripture, to usher in the Service of this Day, and is indeed highly suitable to so great an Occasion; for it holds forth to us both the Nature, Manner, and End of Christ's Death and Resurrection, the Subject of this great Festival. In which words we have,

First, Something to be known by us, with respect to Christ's Resurrection. And,

Secondly, Something like it to be reckon'd upon, in respect of our own.

That which we are to know concerning Christ, is,

1st, That he is rais'd from the Dead.

2dly, That being so, he dieth no more.

3dly, That Death hath no more Dominion over him; together with a Reason added to inforce and illustrate it: For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; but in that he liveth, unto God. Which things will require a little Explication.

I begin with the first and principal thing to be known concerning Christ, and that is, his being rais'd from the Dead; *Knowing this, that Christ being rais'd from the Dead, &c.*

This is a Point highly worthy and necessary to be known by all Christians, since all their hopes of receiving Mercy and Salvation from him, intirely depend upon it. For if Christ be not risen, we are dead in our Sins, and can never
hope

hope either for a new Life here, or for eternal Life hereafter. And because this weighty Truth both deserv'd and needed the greatest Confirmation, the Holy Ghost hath not been wanting to our Faith, in giving us the strongest and clearest Evidence, to settle us in the Knowledg and Belief of it.

Now Christ's Resurrection being a Matter of Fact, the surest, and indeed the only Proof of it must be, from the Testimony of able, faithful, and sufficient Witnesses, who saw and convers'd with him after he rose from the Dead, and from an uninterrupted Tradition of it ever since, which is all the Evidence that the thing is capable of: All which we have in this case, and no reasonable Man can require more. Our Apostle knew it from the Testimony of his own Eyes; for *he saw him*: and beside that, tells us, that *he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve*: A full Jury (saith a Father on those words) able to find any Matter of Fact, and to bring in a true Verdict in it. But if that be not sufficient, which is wont to do in all other Matters, we have the Testimony of many more; for he adds, that *he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once*, most of which were then living, ready to give in the same Verdict, and to attest the same upon Oath, as we read in 1 Cor. 15. 6.

But because 'tis not so much the Number, as the Quality and Credibility of the Witnesses, that begets the Knowledg and Certainty of any Truth; we have abundant Security of that too in this case: had they been some easy credulous Persons, ready to receive any Report, and forward to believe what they much desir'd, they might be well enough challeng'd and set aside, and no great stress could be laid on what they said: but here 'twas quite otherwise; for never was any thing more doubted of, and search'd into at first, and yet nothing was more firmly and universally believ'd after. *Mary Magdalen* first saw him, and reported it; but *they believed her not*. The two Disciples travelling to *Emaus*, saw him, and related it, but neither could they be believ'd. Divers Women together saw him, and came and told the Disciples; but *their Words seem'd to them as idle Tales, and they believ'd them not*. Yea, when Christ appear'd to them in Person in the Evening of the Resurrection, they saw him, and yet doubted, taking him for a Spectre or Ghost, till *he shew'd them his Hands and his Side, and bid them handle him and see him*; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones as they saw him have. And when the Disciples after told

Thomas, who was then absent, that they had seen the Lord, so peremptory and stubborn were his Doubts, that he plainly declar'd, that *unless he saw in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Fingers into his Side, he would not believe*: to which things our Saviour soon after condescended for his Conviction. By which means they all receiv'd that full Satisfaction, that made them boldly preach and testify it every where, even with the hazard of their Lives: God permitting them thus to doubt, to put this great Truth out of all doubt, that *Christ is raised from the Dead*; the first thing the Apostle would have these *Romans* and all Christians to know.

The 2^d is, that being rais'd from the Dead, *he dieth no more*. This is a Privilege added to the former, after being restor'd to Life, to die no more; for some have been rais'd from the Dead, and after that have died again: so did the Widow's Son of *Naim*, Luke 7.14. the Daughter of *Jairus*, Ruler of the Synagogue, Chap. 8. 54. so did *Lazarus* and others, John 11. 43. All which, tho restor'd to Life after Death, yet died afterwards; their Resurrection was no Exemption from Mortality, but only a Return to the same mortal Life, which was again liable to the same Stroke of Death. But *Christ being rais'd from the Dead, dieth no more*: he submitted to Death merely for our sake, and when he had done that, he was no longer subject to Mortality. Hence the Apostle tells us, that *he only hath Immortality*, 1 Tim. 6. 16. that is, he only hath it in and from himself, and can alone give it to others; for which reason he styles himself, *the Resurrection and the Life*, John 11. 25, 26. adding, that he that *believeth in him, tho he were dead, yet shall he live*; and *whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die more*: for by his Resurrection he hath abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light, 2 Tim. 1. 10. His Resurrection was attended with no After-Death, but hath raised both himself and us to a Life immortal; the second thing to be known, *He dies no more*.

The 3^d is, that *Death hath no more dominion over him*. The first Transgression hath put all Mankind under the Power and Sentence of Death; *In the day that thou eatest thereof (saith God) thou shalt surely die*: and as by one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin; even so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned: Rom. 5. 12. After which, we read several times in that Chapter of the Reign of Death, and the Power it hath gain'd over all the
Sons

Sons of Men; *Death reigned from Adam to Moses, ver. 14.* and from thence till now, and is like to continue its Empire to the end of the World. Our Text tells us of *the Dominion of Death*, as if it were some high Lord, or mighty Monarch that had large Territories and Dominions under him; and indeed so it hath, for its Jurisdiction extends to all Mankind, whom it holds in Vassalage and Subjection to him, who *thro fear of Death are all their life-time subject to Bondage.* Hence *Job styles Death the King of Terrors, Job 18. 14.* exercising its Tyranny over all the Posterity of *Adam*, who are liable to its Arrest all the Days of their Life.

Now Christ by his Resurrection hath vanquish'd this mighty Conqueror, and subdu'd this King of Terrors; the Lord of Life hath overcome Death, and *destroy'd him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil; Heb. 2. 14.* So that Death now hath no more dominion over him, he having broken his Power both for himself and us; 'tis *swallow'd up in Victory*, by which Death hath no more Sting, nor Hell any more Dominion: Christ having the Keys of both, he can let in and out whom he pleaseth.

These things the Apostle confirms and illustrates in the following words; *For in that he died, he died unto Sin once; and in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* Where 'twill be requisite to shew,

1st, What is meant by his *dying unto Sin.*

2dly, What by his dying unto Sin *once.* And,

3dly, What by his *living unto God.*

For the 1st, his *dying unto Sin* was his undergoing Death for our Sins, for he had none of his own to render him liable to it; but he becoming our Surety and Saviour, the whole Guilt and Burden of our Sins lay upon him: and because *the Wages of Sin is Death*, and *without shedding of Blood there is no Remission*; he was content to lay down his own precious and innocent Life as a Ransom for ours, his Death was the Expiation or Propitiation for our Sins: and he died unto Sin once, to make an Atonement for us. Moreover, he died unto Sin to mortify and kill Sin in us, to subdue the Power and Dominion of it by the Power of his Grace, that Sin might not reign in our mortal Bodies, nor force us to obey it in the Lusts thereof. In a word, *he died unto Sin once*, that we might not die for it for ever.

But was his dying unto Sin once, sufficient to satisfy for our Sins, which deserv'd a second and eternal Death? Yes, the

the exceeding great Excellence and Dignity of his Person, the inestimable Price of his Blood, the Perfection and Excellency of his Obedience, put such a Merit and Value into his Sufferings, as made them a sufficient Compensation for the Sins of the whole World. His dying then unto Sin once, was enough to answer the Design of it, and there could be no reason or need of his dying any more.

But what is meant by his *living unto God*? for the Apostle tells us, *In that he liveth, he liveth unto God*. Why, this being oppos'd to his dying unto Sin once, signifies his living with God for evermore; that being rais'd from the Dead, he is rais'd to a Life immortal, unchangeable, and that fadeth not away; continuing for ever in Heaven, where he will resume the Glory he had with the Father before the World began. This is spoken as the End and Reward of his Death and Sufferings for our Redemption, that having humbled himself so low for us, he is become highly exalted, never to die more, but to live for ever with the Father; being seated at his Right Hand to make Intercession for his People, and e'er long to bring them to Glory, to live and reign for ever with him.

These are the things the Apostle would have us to know concerning the Nature, Manner, and End of Christ's Resurrection; all which may serve to comfort us under all the Troubles and Miseries of this Life, and fortify us against the Fears of our own or others Death. And this will lead me to the

Second Part of our Text, which is to shew what we are to know and count upon our selves with relation to these things; and that is contain'd in these words: Likewise reckon your selves dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Where we are bid to count upon two things, in conformity to Christ's Resurrection.

- (1.) The dying unto Sin: And,
- (2.) The living unto God by Jesus Christ our Saviour:

(1.) I say, we are to reckon our selves dead indeed unto Sin. To be dead to any thing, we know, is to have no more Motion, Action, or Affection towards it, than is to be found in a dead Body or Carcase: and consequently to be dead to Sin, is to have no Desire, Inclination, or Sign of Life towards it. Christ died unto Sin, that is our Pattern; he did no Sin, nor was any Guile found in his mouth. He died for our Sin, and that is our Encouragement to die to it,

it, to cease from Sin, and to take no farther pleasure therein. *How shall we that are dead to Sin* (saith the Apostle) *live any longer therein?* Not that we are or can be free from Sin altogether, for that is a Perfection which the present Life will not admit of: but free from the Dominion of Sin, we may and should be, that it may not reign in us, or tyrannize over us, and bring us in bondage to every Temptation. The Influence and Example of Christ's Death should so mortify Sin in us, as to reckon our selves dead to it. And,

(2.) The Virtue of his Resurrection should so quicken our Graces, as to reckon our selves *alive unto God*. This St. Paul calls *the Power of his Resurrection*, putting into us a new spiritual Life, and enabling us to walk before him in Newness of Life. We read in the Gospel, that Virtue went out of Christ's Body for the healing of many Diseases; yea, we find one who by the bare touching the Hem of his Garment was cured of a bloody Issue, and made whole. But from his rais'd and glorify'd Body there issues a more Divine Power for the healing the spiritual Maladies of the Soul, breaking the Force of our Corruptions, and strengthening the Graces of the Spirit within us; whereby we die indeed unto Sin, but are alive unto God by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now living unto God implies in it sundry things: As,

1. 'Tis the owning him for our Lord, and that we are his Servants, and receive all things from him; saying with the Apostle, *We are not our own, but are bought with a Price;* and must therefore *glorify him with our Souls and Bodies, which are both his:* not living to our selves, but to him that made and hath dearly bought us.

2. To live unto God, is to frame our Lives according to his Will, and to order all our Words and Actions by the Rule of God's Word, and the Direction of his Laws: to do otherwise, is to live unto our selves, and not unto God.

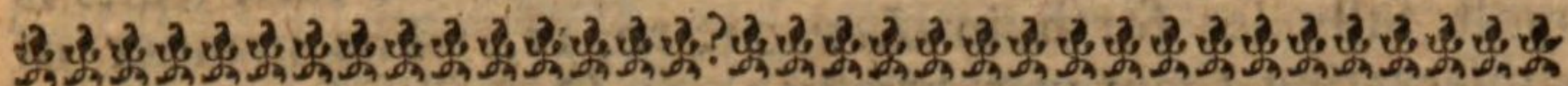
3. To live unto God, is to seek only or chiefly his Glory, and in the whole Course of our Life to study the promoting of his Honour; according to St. Paul's Advice, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the Praise and Glory of God.*

Lastly, To live unto God, is in all the Dangers and Difficulties of our Life to refer our selves unto him, and to depend chiefly upon his Blessing and Protection: so did the Psalmist, casting himself upon the Care of Divine Providence

dence in all the Affairs and Occurrences of his Life, stiling him his Shield, his Buckler, his strong Tower to which he might always resort, the Horn also of his Salvation, and his Refuge. In a word, to live unto God, is to love and fear him above all things, to put our whole Trust and Affiance in him, to honour his holy Name and Word, and to serve him truly all the days of our Life. Which things because we cannot do of our selves, we are minded of doing them *by Jesus Christ our Lord*: that is, by imploring the Aid and Assistance of his Grace, which is alone able to work this great Work in us and for us. Of our selves we can no more raise a Soul from the Death of Sin, than a dead Body from the Dust of the Earth. These are both the Effects of a Divine Power, and above the Sphere of any mortal Creature. St. *Austin* observ'd long since, that *Mary Magdalen*, who was *dead in Trespasses and Sins*, had a greater Resurrection to a Life of Grace, than her Brother *Lazarus* to a natural Life, *after he had lain four days in the Grave*. Both of them were effected by Jesus Christ our Lord, and neither of them could be by any inferior Agent.

To draw then to a Conclusion; let us learn,
 1st, From Christ's Death to die unto Sin, and to crucify the Flesh with the Affections and Lufts: let us every day strive against the Motions of Sin stirring in us, weakning the Power of our Corruptions, and breaking the Force of all its Temptations. This was the main End of our Saviour's dying for us, to mortify the old Man in us, and subdue the Flesh unto the Spirit. *He gave himself for us* (saith the Apostle) *to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works*; Tit. 2. 14. Let us with St. *Paul* be crucify'd to the World, and the World unto us; that we be neither ensnared by the Charms, nor endanger'd by the Frowns of it, but may pass through it with Patience and Innocence to a better Life.

2^{dly}, From Christ's Resurrection let us learn to live unto God, by ordering our Conversation after his Will, and directing all our Works to his Glory. *As we are planted together in the Likeness of his Death, by being bury'd with him in Baptism*; so let us be planted likewise in the Likeness of his Resurrection, by rising again from the Grave of Sin, and walking with him in Newness of Life. And this will carry us with Comfort thro all the Troubles and Calamities of this Life, and bring us at last to Life everlasting: which God of his infinite Mercy grant, thro Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.



DISCOURSE LXI.

I Cor. XV. 20, 21, 22.

Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept. For since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

OF Christ's rising from the Dead, something hath been said before, and more will be said hereafter. At present, the Words read unto you give us the Foundation of the Hope that we have of our own Resurrection, grounded on that of our Saviour's; for he is here stiled *the First-fruits of them that slept*: and that as *Adam* was a publick Person in bringing Death upon all Mankind, so is Christ the publick Representative of all Believers, to restore them to Life and Salvation. Which things being now made the Subject of our Meditations, I shall,

First, Shew in what sense, and for what reason, Christ is here said to be *the First-fruits of them that sleep*. And,

Secondly, Shall consider the Comparison or Resemblance between *Adam* and Christ, the one in bringing Death, the other in restoring Life to all their Followers; which things are the Sum and Substance of these Words.

First then, In what sense, and for what reason, is Christ said to be the First-fruits of them that sleep? The First-fruits, you know, are the Earnest or Beginnings of Harvest, which were requir'd to be consecrated unto God, as an Acknowledgment of receiving all the rest from him. Hence we read in *Gen. 4.* that *Cain* brought *the First-fruits of the Ground*, and *Abel* the *Firstlings of his Flock*, as an Offering unto the Lord: which was the first Original of Sacrifices and Oblations. After that, we find an express Command from God, *The first ripe Fruits of thy Land thou shalt bring unto the Lord*, *Exod. 22. 29.* The same Precept is

is renew'd, *Chap. 23. 16.* But the Law of the First-fruits is most fully set forth in *Lev. 23. 10, 11.* The manner of consecrating them was briefly this: One Sheaf was to be taken out of all the Sheafs of the Field, which were before esteem'd unholy, and was to be brought as the First-fruits of the Harvest unto the Priest. That Sheaf the Priest was to lift up in the name of the rest, and to wave it to and fro before the Lord; and thereby it was consecrated, and became holy and acceptable to him: and by doing of that, not only the Sheaf lifted up, but all the Sheaves in the Field were holy unto the Lord. So the Apostle tells us, *If the First-fruits be holy, the whole Lump is also holy; and if the Root be holy, so are the Branches: Rom. 11. 16.* Now the Resemblance here must run thus: All Mankind were as so many dead Sheaves before God, all unholy and profane; one of them, that is Christ, was in the manner of a Sheaf at this time taken out of the number of the Dead, and in the name of the rest lifted up from the Grave, and at his rising was in a manner waved and shaken; for *there was a great Earthquake, Mat. 28. 2.* By virtue hereof, he as the First-fruits being restor'd to Life, all the rest of the Dead are in him intitled to the same, and rais'd with him; for he was not so lifted up for himself alone, but for us too, and in the name of all his Followers: and so is justly stiled the *First-fruits of the Dead*, and the First-born from the Grave. For as the First-fruits under the Law did sanctify the whole Mass or Heap of the other Fruits; so Christ being raised from the Dead, sanctifies all Believers to a blessed Resurrection.

But here the Order of Time is likewise to be consider'd; for as the First-fruits under the Law were reap'd and receiv'd before the rest of the Crop, so Christ's Resurrection must go before ours, and 'tis by virtue of his that the rising of Believers follows. In this Order the Apostle ranks them, *ver. 23. Christ the First-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.* Hence our Saviour stiles himself *the Resurrection and the Life, John 11. 25.* not only because he is the Author of the Resurrection, and the sole Restorer of Life; but because he is the Earnest, the Pledg, and the First-fruits of both. He alone can give and restore Life; *I have power (saith he) to lay down my Life, and I have power to take it up; John 10. 18.* And the same Power he hath and may exercise over the Lives of others: an Instance whereof he gave in *Lazarus*, who after he had lain four Days

Days in the Grave, till his Body began to putrify, at Christ's Call came forth, and return'd to Life again. Yea, Christ not only hath this Power, but is himself that Divine Power, by which it is effected: *I am he that liveth (saith he) and was dead; and behold! I live for evermore, and have the Keys of Death and Hell.* Rev. i. 18. He can open and shut the Grave as he pleases, and confines and loosens out of that Prison as he thinks fit; for he hath conquer'd Death, and *destroy'd him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil.* Heb. 2. 14. Hence he assures all them that believe in him, *that tho they are dead, yet shall they live again; and whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die:* for which he is truly said to be *the Resurrection and the Life to all that believe in him.* As for the rest, to wit, the unbelieving Part of the World, they are rais'd by Christ too, not as a Mediator to give them everlasting Life, but as a Judg, to sentence them to eternal Death, which, having no share in the Atonement, their wilful Sins have justly deserved.

Thus we see in what sense Christ is said to be the First-fruits or First-born from the Dead; he being the Cause, the Earnest, and the Pledge of our Resurrection: for as an Earnest is given to secure a Bargain, and the First-fruits offer'd to God had an Assurance of his Blessing upon all the rest; so Christ's raising himself and others from the Grave, is a certain Pledg and Security of our rising after him. Upon all which accounts he is stil'd *the First-fruits of them that slept.* Where we may farther observe,

The Manner of the Apostle's expressing it; which is not the First-fruits of the Dead, but of them that slept: thereby intimating to us, that Christ by his Resurrection hath alter'd the Nature of Death, and turn'd it into a Sleep, which we know is the Rest and Refreshment, not the Ruin or Destruction of our Bodies. *If he sleep he shall do well,* said the Disciples concerning *Lazarus*; and if we sleep in Jesus, we may rest in Hope of rising again with him. This is indeed a blessed and happy Change, a Burying-place turned into a Dormitory, the Grave into a Bed, and Death into Sleep; insomuch that when we die, we do but lie down to take our Rest till the Morning of the Resurrection, when we shall awake again into a glorious Immortality. *When I awake* (saith the Psalmist) *I shall be satisfy'd with thy Likeness.* The Scripture frequently represents Death as a Sleep, and the Resurrection as an awaking out of it: *They*
that

that sleep in the Dust shall awake; some to everlasting Life, and some to everlasting Shame and Contempt; Dan. 12. 2. Our Friend Lazarus sleepeth (saith our Saviour) when he told his Disciples of his Death; but I go (saith he) that I may awake him out of Sleep: John 11. 11. St. Stephen when he had pray'd, and gave up the Ghost, is said to fall asleep, Acts 7. 60. And so is David, Chap. 13. 36. And them that sleep in Jesus (saith the Apostle) will God bring with him, 1 Thess. 4. 14. Now as Sleep binds up the Senses awhile, to give Ease to the Body; so doth the Grave bury our Cares and Sorrows, to give Rest unto the Soul. Accordingly, a Voice from Heaven, called them Blessed that die in the Lord, because they rest from their Labours; they withdraw a while into the Grave to put off the Rags of human Frailty, that they may be clothed upon with the Robes of Glory and Immortality. And indeed Christianity gives us far greater Assurances of their awaking, who sleep in the Dust, than we can have of theirs who sleep in their Beds; having a firm Promise of the one, but none of the other: for Christ is become the First-fruits of them that slept. He rose as our Forerunner and Representative; and tho he is got up before us, yet will he shortly come again, and draw us after him.

But here it may be ask'd, Can one Man's Resurrection have such an Influence, as to raise all the rest of Mankind? to which I answer, Yes, as well as one Man's Sin could bring Death upon all the rest. And this will lead me to the

Second Part of our Text, which is to consider the Analogy or Correspondence between Adam and Christ in the Matter of Life and Death, held forth in these words: Since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Where the Resemblance relates,

1st, To the Persons concern'd in bringing in Life and Death; and they were Persons of the same Nature, Men both, for by Man came Death, and by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead.

2dly, To the Capacity or Station wherein they were set, both being publick Persons and Representatives of all Mankind in both those Effects; the one bringing Death, the other restoring Life to all Men.

3dly, Here is a Comparison between the Means or Causes of both these Effects; Death came in by the Punishment of

of one Man's Sin, and Life by the Power of the Resurrection of another.

Lastly, Here is mention of the particular Persons or Authors of both these things; and they are *Adam* and *Christ*: For as in *Adam* all die, even so in *Christ* shall all be made alive. In all which, we are to consider the Truth of the Facts, together with the Justice and Reasonableness of them.

For the Matter of Fact, most certain it is, that we all die in *Adam*; he was the Root of all Mankind, and all we as so many Branches springing from him. Now, we know, if the Root be dead, all the Branches must wither and die with it, and the one cannot long survive the other. God Almighty gave *Adam* a Law to try his Obedience, which if he had kept, he with all his Descendants had stood and continu'd happy to this day: but he, by transgressing it, unhappily fell, and entail'd Misery and Mortality upon all his Posterity ever since. This Covenant was, *Do this, and live*; break it, and die: for in the Day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now *Adam* violating this Covenant, by eating the forbidden Fruit, tainted his Blood, and brought Guilt and Death upon the whole Race of Mankind. So the Apostle tells us, that by one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin; even so Death pass'd upon all Men, for that all have sinned: Rom. 5. 12. so that Death is now the common Lot and Portion of all Men, to whom it is appointed once to die, and after Death to Judgment.

And as 'tis certain that in *Adam* we all die, so is it no less certain that in *Christ* we shall all be made alive: for as the Branches receive Sap from the Vine, and are cherish'd and reviv'd by the Root, even so is the Church by *Christ*; 'tis his own Comparison, *John* 15. 1, 2, &c. As the Members live in and by the Head, and as the Body cannot be drown'd whilst the Head is above Water; so do all Christians live in *Christ*, nor can they always remain bury'd in the Earth, whilst he is above Ground, and ascended up into Heaven: for the Head being risen, the Members must rise together with him. *Christ* hath taken off the Taint that was upon the Blood of *Adam's* Posterity by the first Transgression, and reversing the Attainder, hath restor'd them again by his Righteousness. As there was a Statute, that all Men should die in *Adam*, because they all sinned in him; so was there another Statute, that

all that are in Christ should live in him, because they partake of his Righteousness. The first Statute said, He that brake the Covenant, by doing what was forbidden, should surely die : The second said, He that kept it, by doing what was requir'd, should live in it. Now *Adam* broke this Covenant, and so brought in Death ; Christ fulfil'd it to a tittle, and so restor'd Life.

Nor may we think this strange, or any way inconsistent with Reason and Justice, but highly consonant and agreeable with both : for why should not all rise by one Man's Resurrection, as well as all Men fall and die by one Man's Transgression ? Is there a greater Virtue or Influence in *Adam's* Sin to destroy, than there is in Christ's Satisfaction to save ? and if Death came by the one, why may not Life by the other, especially since the Merits of the latter are infinitely greater and more valuable than the Demerits of the former ?

But neither of them (may some say) appear just or reasonable with respect to those that descend from them, or come after them : for how could any justly suffer Death for the Sin of one, who liv'd so many thousand Years before they were born, to which they could be no Parties, nor give any Consent ? Or how could any receive Life from the Righteousness of one, who liv'd and dy'd so many hundred Years before they had any Being, in which they could be no Partners, nor be any way said to be Actors in it ? Why, the Answer to this is easy and clear : for God Almighty, who was the Maker and Disposer of all things, made these two Persons the publick Heads and Representatives of all Mankind ; and all that descended from or depended upon them, were to stand or fall by their Obedience or Disobedience to him. *Adam* was the natural Head and Root of all that sprung from his Loins ; and all his Posterity coming from that Stock, fell and became mortal by his Disobedience. Christ is the spiritual Head of all Believers, who being engrafted in him by a new Birth, become the Members of his mystical Body the Church, and are rais'd to Life and Immortality by his Obedience ; both which may be well thought highly just and reasonable, being order'd by the Will and Appointment of God, whose Will is the truest and surest Rule of all Right and Justice.

Thus

Thus I have briefly consider'd the two main Particulars of our Text, and given you some short Account of the Equity and Reasonableness of both. What we are to learn from them, by way of Application, will be chiefly comprehended in these two things.

1st, To lament the Misery and Mortality of Mankind by *Adam's Sin*. And,

2ly, To bless God for our Restoration to Life and Immortality, by the Death and Resurrection of Christ; acknowledging the Justice of God in inflicting the one, and adoring his Goodness in granting the other. For the

1st, We find *David* bewailing, that *he was conceiv'd in Sin, and brought forth in Iniquity*; Psal. 51. 5. and all we who, by natural Descent, proceed from our first Parents, partake of the same Guilt and Punishment; by which we are all liable to the Stroke of a natural Death here, and, without Repentance, to the Sting of a second and eternal Death hereafter. And as *David* justify'd God in his Saying, or Sentence pronounc'd against us, and clear'd him when he was judg'd, ver. 4. so ought we still to say with him, that *God is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works*. In like manner we find *St. Paul*, in his unregenerate State, crying out, *O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from this Body of Sin?* Rom. 7. withal owning *Death to be the just Wages of Sin*: and we considering our natural State, ought frequently to do the same. But yet,

2ly, He thanks God for the *Gift of eternal Life*, thro *Jesus Christ our Lord*, of which we are begotten again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of our Saviour: for he being the First-Fruits from the Dead, hath consecrated a new and living way for us thro the Grave to Life everlasting; and he being risen from thence as our Head, will surely draw his Members after him. This is a Mercy never to be forgotten by the Sons of Men, but is more especially to be remembred at this Season, when we are call'd upon to celebrate his Death and Resurrection, and in a Feast too instituted by himself for that purpose; for which therefore we are to prepare and address our selves, that we may remember him at his own Table, and receive the Benefits purchas'd by him at his holy Altar. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE LXII.

The EPISTLE for Easter-Day.

Col. iii. 1 ——— 8.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things of the Earth: for ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Christ in God, &c.

THE Wisdom of the Church (as a Reverend Father hath well observ'd) hath so order'd Matters in its publick Service, that the Gospel for the Day lets us know what was done for us, and the Epistle what is to be done by us; the one shews us the Benefit, the other the Duty that appertains and intitles to it.

This is evident in the Service for this great Festival, where the Gospel shews us Christ risen from the Dead; and the Epistle seeks from thence to raise our Minds and Meditations after him, and to fix them upon the Place and Things where he is gone.

The Collect for the Day hath respect to both, minding us, that Christ, by dying, hath overcome Death; and by rising again, hath open'd unto us the Gate of everlasting Life: from thence teaching us to pray, that he who, by his special Grace preventing us, puts into our Minds good Desires after him, would, by his continual Help, bring the same to good effect.

The Epistle for the Day, which I am now to speak to, supposes two things:

First, That Christ is risen. And,

Secondly, That we are risen with him: If ye then be risen with Christ. And from thence infers two things,

1st, That we should seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God. And to that end,

2ly, That

2ly, That we should take off *our Affections from the things of the Earth*, and set them upon the things of Heaven. These things, together with some Motives and Directions to this purpose, are the Subject of this Day's Epistle, and must be of the following Discourse. I begin with the

First Thing here suppos'd, viz. That Christ is risen. This is that great Act of our Saviour's, upon which all our Faith and Hope in him depend: *For if Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain; 1 Cor. 15. 14.* If that be not true, then is all our Christianity built upon the Sand, and can stand us in no stead; then are we Christians in the most hopeless and helpless Condition, and of all Men the most miserable: and therefore we find our Saviour appealing to his Resurrection for the Truth of his Doctrine, and using it as an Argument to put our Trust in him: *Destroy this Temple* (saith he) *meaning his Body, and in three Days I will raise it up again.* Now if he had fail'd herein, and continu'd still under the power of Death, he might have been taken for an Impostor, and all the Hopes of his Disciples had been for ever bury'd with him: But thanks be to God, he that *was dead is alive again, and lives for evermore, and hath the Keys of Hell and Death: Rev. 1. 18.* By his thus rising from the Dead, he rais'd the dying Hopes of his Followers, confirm'd the Truth of his Doctrine, and secur'd to us Life and Immortality: And therefore we read, that from the Apostles telling one another the News of his Resurrection, there arose an antient Custom in some Churches, for Christians to salute one another on *Easter Morning*, with this Saying, *The Lord is risen;* and the Answer was, *The Lord is risen indeed.* And the whole Christian Church hath appointed a yearly and solemn Commemoration of it with Adoration and Thanksgiving. And because this Article of Christ's Resurrection requir'd the clearest and the fullest Proof, the Spirit of God hath not been wanting to our Faith herein, by confirming it with the Testimony of God, of Angels, and Men, as we shall see hereafter. In the mean time I proceed to the

Second Thing here suppos'd, and that is, that *we are risen with Christ; If ye then be risen with Christ.* Where the Apostle takes it for granted, not only that Christ is risen, but that we too are risen with him.

But how can we be said to be risen with Christ, when he, who was once dead, is risen again, and gone to Heaven, and we having not yet tasted of Death, remain still alive upon Earth?

In answer to this, we are to take notice of a twofold Resurrection: the one of the Soul, from the Death of Sin to a Life of Righteousness, call'd, in Scripture, *The first Resurrection*; the other of the Body, from the Grave to a Life of Glory, call'd, *The second Resurrection*. In the first sense we are said to be risen with Christ already, our Souls being, by the virtue of his Resurrection, quicken'd into a spiritual Life of Grace here; in the other sense, we shall rise with him hereafter, when the Power of his Resurrection shall quicken our mortal Bodies into an eternal Life of Glory and Immortality.

Now 'tis in the former sense that all good Christians are here suppos'd to be risen with Christ, being, by the virtue of his Resurrection, rais'd to a new and spiritual Life: And this is begun in our Baptism, wherein we, who are born dead in Trespases and Sins, are regenerated, and *born again of Water and the Holy Ghost*, and thereby quicken'd unto a Life of Righteousness. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. 6. 3, 4, 5. *Know ye not, that as many of us as are baptiz'd into Christ, are baptiz'd into his Death? Therefore we are bury'd with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was rais'd from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life: for if we are planted together in the Likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection.* That is, as by being dipp'd in the Waters of Baptism, we are made conformable to Christ's Death, by dying unto Sin; so by rising again out of the Waters, we are made conformable to his Resurrection, by living unto Righteousness: which new and regenerate Life, receiv'd in the Sacrament of Baptism, is after maintain'd and preserv'd by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And in this sense it is, that we are here said to be *risen with Christ*. From whence the Apostle infers two or three things:

1st, That we should raise our Minds to the things above: *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God.* By the things above we are to understand the things of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, the Salvation of our Souls, and the great Affairs of Eternity, call'd the *Things above*;

above; because they are far above all things here below, both in Excellence and Situation, in Dignity and Duration. To seek those things, is to labour to know, to search into, and to enquire after them; and that too not slightly, coldly, and indifferently, like those that seek as if they sought not, but in good earnest, with all our Skill and Might, as those that give themselves no Rest till they have found. All seeking, we know, implies Motion, Diligence, and Intention, without which nothing of Worth can be had; 'tis oppos'd to Laziness and sitting still, which neither seeks nor finds any thing: And since even the things here beneath cannot be come by without Labour and Travail, 'tis great Folly to think that the things above will drop into our Laps without seeking; no, we shall not stumble or hit upon them unawares, but they at once call for and deserve our diligent Search. But how are we to seek these things? Why, in the way and means of God's own appointing; to wit, by Prayer, Meditation, hearing of God's Word, receiving the Holy Sacraments, with all other Acts and Exercises of a Holy Life: for the new regenerate Life is not an idle, careless, but an active Life, that consists in Motion, and puts us upon the utmost Care and Pains in seeking after Happiness. And where is that? Why, in Heaven, *where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God.* The Right Hand of God is the Place of the greatest Power and Glory, of the highest Honour and Happiness; and since Christ, with whom we are risen, is seated there, let us elevate our Minds, and seek and make after him. To this end the Apostle advises,

2dly, *To set our Affections on the Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* A Man will not seek what he doth not truly affect. And therefore to quicken our Motion and Endeavours after the Things above, we must set our Hearts and Affections upon them, and that will draw us powerfully after them: we are restless in the Pursuit of what our Hearts are set upon, and no Motion is so nimble and steady as that which mounts upon the Wings of Love. Let us then count the Things above our chiefest or only Treasure, and lay it up in Heaven, where 'tis free from all Hazards, and will prove a Portion and Maintenance to us for ever; not on the Earth, where 'tis subject to the Moth, the Rust, and the Robber, and will stand us in no stead when we stand in most need of it: and then where our Treasure is, there will our Hearts be also; the Heart will follow the

Treasure: and if we place it in Heaven and heavenly Things, the Mind and Affections will be fix'd there, and make us like Eagles, be still soaring aloft and mounting towards it; but if we place it on the Earth and earthly Things, the Heart will be glu'd to the Earth, and make us like Moles, continually digging and groveling in it. Let our Ambition then aspire higher than the Things of this World, and our Affections carry us to the Things above; not to be above others in Power, Honour, and Preferments here on Earth, for these are all Temporal and Transitory Things, but to the Honours and Happiness of Heaven, which are Eternal and Never-failing. And for this the Apostle adds a good Reason in the next Verse:

For ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Christ in God; that is, by the Profession and Promise made in Baptism, we are dead to this World, having renounc'd all the Evil Courses, Customs, and Practices of it, and bid adieu to all its Poms and Vanities: Infomuch, that we are to have no more relish or regard to them, than a dead Man that is void of all Sense and Motion: for how should we that are dead to sin (saith the Apostle) live any longer therein? Rom. 6. 2. Baptism is a vow'd Death unto Sin, and the beginning of a new Christian Life, whereby we are oblig'd to live no longer to our selves, but to him that hath so dearly bought us. Hence we find St. Paul declaring, that he was crucified to the World, and the World was crucified to him: and elsewhere, that he was crucified with Christ; nevertheless (saith he) I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the Life that I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal. 2. 20.

And this *Life is here said to be hid with Christ in God*: Tho it be not discern'd or understood by the World, yet 'tis well known to God, by whose invisible Influence it is cherish'd and maintain'd: And tho we are not yet in full Fruition of this Spiritual and Eternal Life, yet is it in safe Custody with God in Christ.

And when he who is our Life shall appear, then shall we appear with him in Glory. This leads to the second Sense, in which we are said to be risen with Christ; to wit, the Resurrection of the Body. Christ hath stil'd himself, *The Resurrection and the Life*, John 11. 25. adding, that *he that believeth in him, tho he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die an eter-*

nal Death. His rising again from the Grave was the Pledg and Earnest of our Resurrection: upon which account he is stil'd, *The First-born from the Dead, and the First-Fruits of them that slept.* And tho he suffer us to stay here a-while after him to struggle with Sicknes and Death, yet when he who is our Resurrection and our Life shall appear again with Power and great Glory, then shall we be rais'd again, and appear with him in Glory: then shall our frail mortal Bodies which are sown in Weakness, be rais'd in Power, and be cloth'd with Honour and Immortality.

Now from these two Resurrections, the one of the Soul from the Death of Sin; the other of the Body, from the Grave of Corruption; the Apostle infers,

3dly, The great Duty of Mortification, *ver. 5. Mortify therefore your Members that are upon the Earth; Fornication, Uncleanness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry.* Where by the *Members that are upon the Earth*, we are to understand all those vicious Inclinations that are in our Members, and carry them out only to earthly and sensual Pleasures; or those vile Affections and Lusts that make up the Body of Sin, with which the Soul is so encumber'd: such are Adultery, Fornication, all beastly and unnatural Lusts, impure Desires, and an inordinate Love and Pursuit of worldly Things; which by serving Mammon more than God, is justly branded for Idolatry. These we are commanded to mortify and subdue, to cast off the Reliques of the Old Man, and to be renew'd in the Spirit of our Mind. This the Profession we have taken upon us, obliges all Christians to; the New Life to which we are rais'd and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, engages us to all Purity of Heart and Life, to possess our Vessels in Sanctification and Honour, and to consecrate our Bodies as the Living Temples of the Holy Ghost. To do otherwise, is to contradict and dishonour our Holy Calling, to pollute the Mansions of the Holy Spirit, and to make the Members of Christ the Members of a Harlot; which things are highly provoking unto God, and pernicious both to our Bodies and Souls. So are we here told, that,

For these things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience. For beside that they deprive us of the Favour of God, and the Peace of our Minds here; they exclude us for ever from the Kingdom of God hereafter: *For this ye know (saith the Apostle) that no Whoremonger or unclean Person, or covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any*

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Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God; Ephes. 5. 5. This is a matter taught by the Light of Reason and natural Conscience, as well as the Light of Scripture, and is therefore a Truth well known to all: the Mischief these sinful Lusts do to the Body, the Soul, the Estate, and the good Name, is so obvious, that none can be ignorant of it; beside, the Vengeance of God is known to pursue those Persons and Places where these Wickednesses reign; of which the fore Judgments that befel *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, *Jerusalem*, and other Places, are sad Instances.

Of these things the Apostle gave these *Colossians* the greater Warning, because they themselves had been formerly guilty of them. *In the which things* (saith he) *ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.* Meaning, that while they continued Heathens, and convers'd among them, they walk'd and wallow'd with them in these detestable Vices; but now being chang'd and converted into Christians, and having the Danger and Deformity of their former sinful Courses more plainly laid before them, they were to abhor and abandon them, and to walk no longer in them.

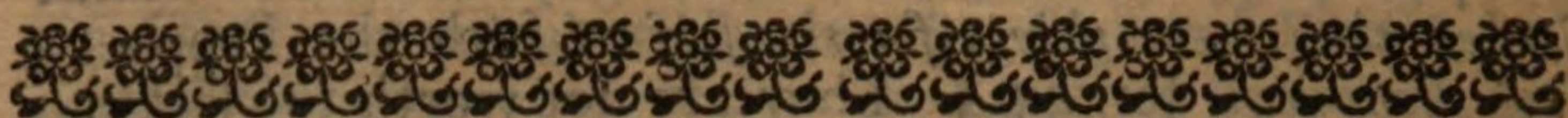
This is the Substance of this Day's Epistle, which minds us of a double Resurrection; the one present, the other future: The present Resurrection is from a spiritual Death in Trespases and Sins, to a spiritual Life of Grace and Holiness; the future, is from a Corporal Death to a Life of Glory and Happiness: both which are to be minded by us, especially on this Day of our Saviour's Resurrection, when we may be said in both those senses to be risen with Christ; that is, by the Virtue and Power of his Resurrection. Upon the whole then, let us learn hence,

1st, To confirm our Faith in this great Article, and improve it to a rising to Newness of Life now, that we may rise to an Eternal Life of Blessedness hereafter: for *blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first Resurrection; because on such, the second Death shall have no Power.* Rev. 20. 6.

2^{dly}, Let us learn from hence, to raise our Minds and Affections above the perishing Trifles of this World, and to fix them upon the more durable and desirable Treasures of Heaven. There is nothing here below, that is worth half that Care and Sollicitude that Men are wont to bestow upon it; the greatest Glories and glittering Things in it, afford no Content or Satisfaction, and in a little time vanish
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and pass away, and then are as if they had never been : *Seekest thou great things for thy self? (saith the Prophet) seek them not; Jer. 45. 5.* They are not worth the seeking: for either we cannot find them, and then the Labour is in vain ; or if we do, we find little or nothing in them ; and upon that account the Labour is not much better. This World is no Resting-place for the Soul, and to seek for it here, is to seek the Living among the Dead : and therefore we have all reason to wish with the Psalmist, *Oh ! that I had Wings like a Dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest.* *We have here no continuing City, (saith the Apostle) but we seek one to come :* 'Tis in vain to set up our Rest here, where none is to be had ; we must mount higher, if we mean to find rest to our Souls. Seek then, and set your Affections upon the Things above, which are alone worthy of your Love and your Pursuit. Christ being risen, let us go after him with our Souls now, that our Bodies too may shortly follow him ; he is seated at the Right Hand of God, and if we love and long after him, he will e'er long take us to the Seat of his Glory.

In the mean time, let us remember the Death and Resurrection of our Lord in that Holy Feast, appointed by himself to that purpose. By his Death he hath led the King of Terrors in Triumph, and loos'd the Bands of Death, that we might not be holden of it : By his Resurrection he hath open'd to us the Gate of Everlasting Life, and obtain'd an Entrance for us into the Kingdom of Heaven. And tho he be already ascended thither, yet, like *Elisha*, he hath left his Mantle behind him, even the Mysteries of this Holy Sacrament ; where by eating his Flesh and drinking his Blood, are represented and convey'd to us the Blessings of both : so that he hath left his Love with us, tho his Person be taken from us. By receiving this Bread of Life, we shall quicken our Appetite to the things above ; and by taking this Potion of Immortality, we shall thirst for a fuller Draught of those Pleasures, which are at God's Right Hand for evermore. In a word, let us feed on Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; so shall we, e'er long, feast with him for ever ; and by rising now from the Grave of Sin, he will shortly raise us to the Life Immortal. Which God grant, for the sake of his dearly beloved Son, who died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE LXIII.

The G O S P E L for *Easter-Day*.

St. John xx. I—II.

The first Day of the Week cometh Mary Magdalen early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre, and seeth the Stone taken away from the Sepulchre: then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other Disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith, They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day gives us a Relation of Christ's Resurrection, from the Mouth of those that were Eye-witnesses to the Truth of it; and indeed this being a Matter of Fact, the best Proof or Evidence of it must be from the Testimony of competent and credible Witnesses, that were able to judg, and narrowly look'd into the Matter; of which sort we have some here, and more elsewhere. And that we may be well establish'd in the Belief of this important Truth, upon which all our Religion stands, I shall produce the Witnesses, and then sum up the Evidence brought by them to confirm it. And the

First here mention'd by St. John is *Mary Magdalen*; to whom St. Matthew adds another *Mary*, Mat. 28. 1. who, as St. Mark tells us, was *Mary the Mother of James and John*, Mark 16. 1. St. Luke adds to these *Joanna*, the Wife of Herod's Steward, and other Women, Luke 24. 10. These who had follow'd our Saviour in his Life-time, were now at his Death impatient to know what was become of him; and therefore as soon as their Sabbath was over, which was the next day after his Death, and nothing but the devout Observation of the Sabbath could have kept them so long from the Sepulchre; I say, as soon as that was over, on the first Day of the

the Week, which was next Morning, *Mary Magdalen* very early, and when it was yet dark, that is, before Sun-rising, ran before the rest, and with a Valour more than a Woman's, came very soon to the Sepulchre: for which reason (as some tell us) she had the Honour of the first sight of him; for St. *Mark* declares, that he appeared first to *Mary Magdalen*, Chap. 16. 9. St. *John* here intimates, that she came alone, and saw the great Stone, that was roll'd at the Door of the Sepulchre, taken away, and looking in, found the Body likewise taken from thence; at which being surpriz'd with Wonder and Grief, she ran and came to *Simon Peter*, and to the other Disciple whom *Jesus* loved, that is, *John*, between whom and *Peter* there was a more dear and particular Friendship; and, with great Concern, said unto them, *They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him*; for the Monument is thrown open, and no body found there.

Upon the hearing of this sad News, *Peter* went forth, and that other Disciple, and came to the Sepulchre. They hasten'd away with all speed to the Place, the better to inform themselves and others of the Truth of this Matter; so they ran both together, but the other Disciple *John*, being much the younger, did outrun *Peter*, and came first to the Sepulchre; where he stooped down, and looked into the Monument, and saw the Linen Clothes lying, but he proceeded no farther, and went not in, till *Peter* came up to him, who presently, according to his usual Forwardness, went into the Sepulchre, and there saw the Linen Clothes lie, and the Napkin that was about his Head not lying with the Linen Clothes, but decently wrap'd up, and laid in a place by it self. After which, St. *John*, the other Disciple that came first to the Sepulchre, went in also, where he saw the Night-clothes and other Linen orderly folded up and plac'd, like one newly come out of Bed; whereupon the Evangelist tells us, *He saw and believed*; that is, he began then to have some Thoughts of what our Saviour had so often foretold, namely, his Resurrection; of which before they had little or no Knowledg, for the next words declare, that as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the Dead. And therefore we find our Saviour checking the Backwardness of their Faith in this Particular, saying, *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! ought not Christ to have suffer'd these things, and to enter into his Glory?* And beginning at *Moses* and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning

concerning himself, *Luke 24. 25, 26.* The Apostles themselves were a little tainted with that Vanity of the Jews, in expecting a pompous and victorious Messias; for when Christ at any time discours'd before them of his Sufferings, they were generally stumbled and offended at it: *Let that be far from thee, Lord* (saith St. Peter) *that shall not happen unto thee;* when he talked of his going up to *Jerusalem*, and there suffering many things of the Chief Priests and Elders, of being kill'd, and rais'd again the third Day; *Mat. 16. 21, 22.* Yea, after his Death we find them muttering, We thought it had been he that should have restor'd the Kingdom unto *Israel*: which shews that they desponded at his Death, and despair'd of his Resurrection; for neither *Mary Magdalen*, nor the other Disciples, tho they found the Body taken away, did presently believe that he was come to Life again, but that it was taken from that honourable Sepulchre, in which it was laid, and carry'd to a meaner or worse place: for we read here, that as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again. And St. *Mark* tells us, that after all this that they had seen and heard, they believed not, *Mark 16. 11, 12, 13.* And so the Disciples went away again unto their own home; that is, they stay'd no longer here at the Sepulchre, where was no more to be seen, for fear of Danger, but repair'd hastily to their own Houses, much wondring (saith St. *Luke*) at that which was come to pass.

But tho all the rest went their way, yet *Mary Magdalen* stay'd behind, and stood still at the Sepulchre weeping; 'tis said of this *Mary* in another place, that she loved much: and by this it appear'd she did so; for she was the last at his Cross, and the first at his Grave, and stay'd longest at both, when all the rest left him, and went away. She stay'd there weeping for him; her great Concern for his Body drew Tears from her, who dearly loved him both living and dead: When Christ stood at *Lazarus's Grave* and wept, the Jews said, See how he loved him! *John 11. 36.* And the same may be said here, when *Mary* stood by Christ's Grave and wept, See how she loved him! Her Love made her sorrowful and restless till she had paid the last Office of Duty and Service to his dead Body, by embalming it with Spices, and bestowing the Preparations she had made upon it.

But as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the Sepulchre: Her Affection and Curiosity would not suffer her to be quiet, without making the utmost Search and Scrutiny after him; and as she looked, she saw two Angels in white shining Garments,

Garments, sitting one at the Head, the other at the Feet of the Tomb, where the Body of Jesus had lain. And here we find the Fathers descanting on this Vision: Angels in the Grave (saith one) was a strange Sight, and such as was never seen before: Heaven is the Seat of those glorious Creatures, but the Grave is no place for Angels, but rather for Worms; but Christ's Sacred Body had been there, and that consecrated the Place; his Presence is able to bless any Post, and blessed must the Place be where the Lord lay. This made such a blessed Change in the State of that Place, as made St. *Austin* cry out, *Quid gloriosius Angelo, quid vilius Vermiculo?* What more glorious than an Angel, what more vile than a Worm? And yet, *Qui fuit Vermiculorum locus est & Angelorum*; That which was the place for Worms, is become a place for Angels.

But what was the Message or Errand of these Angels here? Why, to honour Christ's Resurrection, as they had before his Nativity, to comfort the Disciples, and to increase the Joy of that Solemnity. Accordingly, *Mary* looking again into the Sepulchre with Tears and Grief, for she yet knew him not to be alive, the Angels said unto her, *Woman, why weepest thou?* She saith unto them, *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him*: Cause enough, she thought, for the deepest Mourning and Sorrow; for she had lost her Lord, whom she lov'd above all things, and that not only by taking away his Life, but by taking away his dead Body too, which she came to anoint, and do her last Office to; and which was worse, they had carry'd him away she knew not whither, without any hopes of finding or fetching him again: *I know not* (saith she) *where they have laid him*.

But when she had thus said, hearing somebody behind her, she turn'd her self about, and saw Jesus standing, but knew not that it was he. Her Tears had so dimm'd her Sight, that she could not well discern Things or Persons, especially being early in the Morning too. The Person she took him for was the Gardiner, who dress'd the Garden, where the Sepulchre was: And a Gardiner indeed he was (saith a Father upon the Place) one that made such an Herb grow out of the Ground this Day, as was never seen before, a dead Body to shoot forth alive out of the Grave. This Gardiner finding *Mary* still in Tears, not yet knowing that he was risen, said unto her, *Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?* She taking him for the Gardiner, and thinking he might remove the Body from that costly Tomb, and dispose of it elsewhere, reply'd to him, *Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where*
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thou hast laid him, and I will take him away; where she shews her great care about the Body, requesting that, if possible, she might have it to provide for it another Burying-place, and none should be any farther molested by it.

Our Lord, hearing her passionate Expressions, and in a manner overcome by the Ardency of her Affection and Concern for him, could refrain no longer; but shewing himself in his own Likeness, graciously spake to her, calling her by her own Name: at which turning about, she then knew both his Person and Voice, and being ravish'd with Joy, said unto him, *Rabboni*, that is to say, Master, falling down prostrate to adore him, and kiss his Feet; but Christ forbad those things at present, and entertain'd her with Discourses of his speedy ascending and going to his Father, willing her to go forthwith to his Brethren or Disciples, and to tell them, that his Resurrection was accomplish'd, and that he was shortly to ascend to his Father, and now, by the Merit of his Passion, their Father likewise, who was thereby become their God as well as his. And having spoke these things to her, he suddenly disappear'd and went from her, who was no doubt over-joy'd at the sight of him, and not a little afflicted with his so sudden Departure. However, she immediately hastened away to carry the News to the Disciples, telling them, that she had seen the Lord, and what things he had spoken unto her.

And now we are come to the several Appearances he made, to confirm them and us in the Truth of his Resurrection, the great thing we remember and commemorate this Day.

The first whereof was, we see, to *Mary Magdalen*, who for loving much had this great Honour and Favour shew'd her, to have the first sight of him after he rose from the Dead; as we read *Mark 16*.

The other Appearances he made after are recited by *St. Paul* in *1 Cor. 15. 5, 6, &c.* where he tells us, he was seen first of *Cephas*, that is, of *Peter*, who was first call'd *Simon*, and after *Cephas*, and then *Peter*; which signifies a Rock, because upon his Confession, as upon a Rock, the Church was built: and perhaps for that among other Reasons (tho *Mary Magdalen* was before him) his first Appearance to the Apostles was made to him. So *St. Luke* likewise tells us, *Chap. 24. 34.* And this Apparition, some think, might be at his Return from the Sepulchre, whilst *John*, as swifter of foot, was then also gone before him, to tell the strange and joyful News. However that be, his

Next Appearance was to the Twelve Apostles, of which St. John informs us in this Chapter, *ver. 19, 20.* where we read that when the Disciples were assembled, and for fear of the Jews had shut the Doors, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, saying, *All hail, or Peace be unto you.* And lest they should take him for a Ghost or Spectre, that assum'd a Body, therein to appear for awhile, and then vanish away, he shewed unto them his Hands and his Side: St. Luke adds, that he bid them handle him, and see him, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have; Chap. 24. 39. And because they yet doubted the Reality of his Body, he call'd for Meat, and when they gave him a piece of a broiled Fish, and a Honey-Comb, he ate it before them: so far did he condescend for their Satisfaction. But because one of the Apostles, namely Thomas, was wanting at this Meeting, they went and acquainted him with this Matter; but he being more than ordinarily distrustful, when they told him that they had seen the Lord, reply'd to them, "That except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails that fasten'd him to the Cross, and put my Finger into the Holes of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side, which the Soldier's Spear had pierc'd," he would not believe it was he. Hereupon after eight Days, when the Disciples were met again, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the Doors being shut, and stood in the midst of them, saying as before, *Peace be unto you:* and seeing Thomas, saith unto him, *Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side; and be not faithless, but believing.* Whereupon Thomas answer'd and said, *My Lord, my God;* meaning, that he acknowledg'd him for his very Lord and Master, and was satisfy'd of his Divine Power, in raising himself from the Dead.

After this, St. Paul tells us, that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain'd alive to his time, tho some were fallen asleep. Now these were the People of Galilee, mention'd *Mat. 28. 7, 10.* to whom Christ appear'd soon after his Resurrection.

But to go on, the Apostle tells us, that after this he was seen of James, our Lord's Brother, to whom he made a particular Appearance, and constituted him Bishop of Jerusalem; and then to all the Apostles together. And,

Lastly, St. Paul adds, that he was seen of him too, as of one born out of due time; meaning, that tho he knew not our Saviour before his ascending into Heaven, and so could not see him in the Flesh, as the other Apostles did; yet after his Ascension

he saw him in a Vision, when being converted by him, he vouchsafed to speak to him by a Voice from Heaven, and exhibited himself to his sight, and receiv'd him thro his special Grace and Favour into the Number of his Apostles.

These were some of the principal Appearances that Christ made of himself after he rose from the Dead; whereby he abundantly confirm'd the Truth, and establish'd his Followers in the Faith of his Resurrection. And now let us briefly sum up the Evidence given in this Matter, and consider,

1st, The Number of the Witnesses that saw and convers'd with him, which amount to many Hundreds, I might say many Thousands: And if out of the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Word shall be establish'd, upon how firm a Foundation must this Truth stand, which proceeded out of the Mouths of so many? Again,

2^{dly}, These Witnesses were not a few credulous Persons that were easy of Belief, and might be persuaded to receive it upon any slight Grounds, but were Persons possess'd with mighty Doubts, and look'd upon the first Report of it to be no better than *an idle Tale*; which made them go and look into the Grave, and to examine the whole Matter with the strictest and most impartial Scrutiny: and *Thomas* above the rest was so distrustful, that he declar'd, that without ocular and sensible Demonstration he neither could nor would believe it. And yet,

3^{dly}, These Persons had all their Doubts remov'd, and receiv'd all that Satisfaction which Infidelity and Distrust it self could desire; yea, *Thomas* himself had those palpable Proofs of the Eye, the Ear, and the Hand, that made him break out into the amplest Acknowledgment and Adoration of him. Moreover,

4^{thly}, These Persons, so fully convinc'd, publish'd this Truth every where with the greatest Boldness; insomuch that no Threats or Punishments could daunt their Courage in the Delivery of it: And all this without any the least Appearance of worldly Interest, yea to the manifest hazard of their Lives and Fortunes. No Bonds or Imprisonments, no nor yet Death it self could make them stifle or disown this Truth, which they had in Commission to deliver; as you may read at large in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

To all which we may add, in the last place, the mighty Credit that this Truth hath gain'd ever since; Persons of all Times, Ages and Places being proselyted to the Belief of it. Tho great Endeavours have been us'd to suppress it; yet the unde-

undeniable Evidence of it hath baffled all Attempts of that kind, made it spread and prevail the more, and to triumph over all Opposition.

And now put all these things together, and we may plainly see the undoubted Truth and Certainty of Christ's Resurrection, and that no Matter of Fact ever was or can be more fully prov'd. From whence, by way of Application, we may infer these two things:

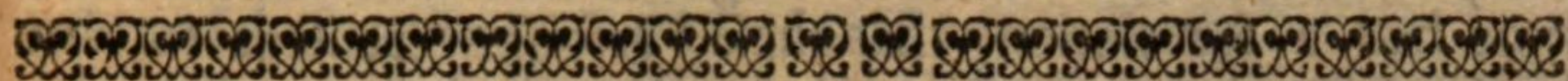
(1.) To establish our Minds in a stedfast Faith of our Lord's Resurrection; for this is the great bearing Article that supports and confirms all the rest. *If Christ be not risen* (saith the Apostle) *then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain*; but Christ, you see, is risen, and by many infallible Proofs found alive, and therefore all is found and good: Let us therefore continue stedfast in this Faith; and the rather, because there have been found some in all Ages, who have labour'd hard to shake and undermine it. In the Apostles Days there were some, among whom were *Hymeneus* and *Philetus*, who affirm'd the Resurrection to be past already, and thereby shak'd the Faith of many: there were others, among whom were the *Sadduces*, who flatly deny'd the Resurrection; of whom St. Paul speaks, *If Christ be risen from the Dead, how say some among you, that there is no Resurrection?* 1 Cor. 15. And there are some in our Days, who would have it thought a thing incredible that God should raise the Dead. Let us therefore arm our selves with the Shield of Faith against all such Seducers; and by frequent considering the Scriptures, and the Power of God, we may be daily built up more and more in this Holy Faith.

(2.) From what hath been said, let us learn to conform to Christ's Resurrection, by rising again unto Newness of Life. This is the Use St. Paul would have us to make of it, in the sixth Chapter to the *Romans*, to frame our selves and Actions to the Likeness of his Resurrection: which we are to imitate, 1st, By rising speedily from the Death of Sin; for as Christ would not defer his Resurrection, but made haste to arise, as soon as he had fulfil'd the Prophecies concerning himself, so should we make haste, and delay not the time to awake out of this spiritual Slumber, and be quickened into a Life of Grace. Every minute now is too long to continue in our Sins, and we cannot be too early in our Preparations for a better Resurrection.

2dly, We should imitate him, by rising fully and compleatly from the Death of Sin; that as Christ left all the Linen Clothes, Napkins and other Furniture of a dead Corps behind him in the Grave; so should we perfectly rid our selves of the whole Body of Sin, with all its Appurtenances, not suffering any to remain about us, but casting off the very Garments spotted with the Flesh, and avoiding all the Occasions and Appearances of Evil.

3dly, We must conform to Christ's Resurrection, by returning no more to our former Courses: for as Christ being rais'd from the Dead, dies no more, Death having no more Dominion over him; so we having died unto Sin once, should live no longer therein: Sin must no longer reign in our mortal Bodies to fulfil the Lust thereof; our Duty and Wisdom is so to rise with Christ, as to return no more to Folly. This is the best way of observing *Easter*; and if we resolve and continue so to do, we shall keep this Feast to good purpose: for by thus having our Fruit unto Holiness, the End will be everlasting Life. Which God grant, &c.





DISCOURSE LXIV.

The EPISTLE for *Easter-Monday.*

Acts x. 34——43.

Peter opened his Mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no Respector of Persons; but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him. The Word which God sent unto the Children of Israel, preaching Peace by Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all; that Word, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea and Galilee after the Baptism of John, &c.

THE occasion of these Words, which are selected for the Epistle for this Day, was from a heavenly Vision made to *St. Peter*, concerning the calling in and receiving the *Gentiles* into the Christian Church. An Account of this Vision we have in the ninth and following Verses of this Chapter; where *Peter*, by a symbolical Representation from Heaven, was admonish'd not to look upon the *Gentiles* as common or unclean, but freely to eat, and drink, and converse with them as Brethren, and Members of the same Society. *St. Peter* was at first surpriz'd with Wonder and Astonishment at the Strangeness of the Message, *knowing it to be unlawful*, by the *Jewish Religion*, for one that was a Jew to keep Company, or come unto one of another Nation. Nevertheless, God having warned him not to call any Man common or unclean, he was not disobedient to the heavenly Vision: in which he was the more confirm'd by three Messengers then knocking at his Door, and enquiring for him; from whom he receiv'd this Account, *viz.*

That *Cornelius* a Centurion, of the *Italian Band*, a devout Man, one that feared God, and gave much Alms unto the People, had, by an immediate Command from God, sent for

him, to let him know what he ought to do: *Peter* at the same time had a Revelation, that these Persons were sent to him by God for that purpose; and therefore doubting nothing, he should arise and go down with them. Accordingly *St. Peter* the next Morning went along with them to *Cesarea*; where *Cornelius* with some of his Friends meeting him, fell down at his Feet, and worshipped him; but *Peter* took him up, saying, *Stand up, for I also am a Man*, and cannot receive the Honour that is due to God only. And then entring into his House, said unto him, that tho hitherto it had not been lawful for the Jews to converse familiarly with the *Gentiles*, yet now God had taught him another Lesson, and so proceeded to enquire more particularly for what Intent he had sent for him. Whereupon *Cornelius* spake these words unto him; *Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and about the ninth hour I prayed in my House, which were the hours of Fasting and Prayer; and behold a Man (or an Angel in the Shape of a Man) stood before me in bright Clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy Prayers are heard, and thine Alms are had in Remembrance in the sight of God: Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he is lodged at the House of one Simon a Tanner by the Sea-side, who when he cometh shall speak unto thee, and make known more of my Mind.* But here it may be ask'd,

Why did not the Angel declare the whole of this Affair to *Cornelius*, but order him to send about Messengers to *Peter*, to acquaint him with it, and reveal this Mystery to the World? Why, this was done for two weighty Reasons:

1st, For the Honour of God's Ministers, whom he had appointed Stewards and Dispensers of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; which Honour he reserv'd and confin'd to them, lest they should be otherwise too much vilify'd and contemn'd by a wicked World. And,

2^{dly}, This was done to let us know, that we are not to expect any extraordinary Ways of Teaching and Information, where ordinary Means are afforded sufficient for that purpose; for which Reasons the Angel acquainted not *Cornelius* with the whole of this Matter, but directed him to the Apostle for farther Instruction in it. *Peter* then being by God Almighty's Order come to *Cornelius's* House, and finding him a Person of great Piety and Religion, tho a *Gentile*, yet willing to become a Christian, and ready to hear what he had from God to say unto him, began his Discourse with the Words appointed for the Epistle for this Day.

Then

Then Peter opened his Mouth, and said; he whose Mouth seem'd before shut, and his Mind taken up with a silent Admiration at this new and strange Dispensation, now opens and breaks forth into these words: *Of a truth I perceive that God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him:* where, by a true and impartial weighing of Matters, it appear'd plain and evident to him, that God judges not of Persons by any outward Respects of Country or Nation, Sect or Condition; but by the inward Purity of the Heart, and Piety of their Works: He regards no Man above another merely because he is a Jew, or descended from the Stock of *Abraham*; nor does he accept the Persons of Men for any external Privileges or Prerogatives; but 'tis the fearing of God, and doing what is righteous in his sight, that alone recommends us to him. The devout and pious Person, the righteous and good Man, is equally dear to Heaven wherever he be; he respects the vertuous and upright Man as well in the Wilds of *Scythia*, as upon Mount *Zion*, and makes no difference upon the account of the Climate or Country.

The Partition-wall, that separated between the Jew and the Gentile, is now broken down, all Names of Distinction are to be laid aside, and are all swallow'd up in that of Christian; insomuch that now *there is neither Jew nor Greek, Bond or Free, Male or Female*; for they are all one in Christ Jesus. God accepts none for the outward Circumstances or Quality of the Person, but for the inward Temper of the Mind: he looks not as Man looks, to the outward Appearance, but beholds the Heart, and accepts or rejects according to the good or evil Bent and Inclination of that.

And this may teach us to avoid all Partiality, and to judge of things not by any external Advantages or Appearances, but by the internal Merits or Demerits of the Person. And from Christ's uniting both Jew and Gentile into the one Body of his Church, and receiving Persons of all Nations, Sexes and Countries into it, we may learn to avoid all Factions and Divisions, and to *endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; that there may be no Schism in the mystical Body of Christ, but all the Members may join together in the same Mind, and the same Judgment.

But to go on: Peter and Cornelius having by Visions and Directions from Heaven made known the happy Union and Conjunction of the Jews and Gentiles into one Body of the Christian Church; the Apostle proceeds to instruct Cornelius

and the other *Gentiles* in the Mysteries of the Gospel, and the Principles of the Christian Religion, of which they had heard something, and so had some imperfect Knowledge; as appears by what follows.

The Word (saith he) *which was sent to the People of Israel, preaching Peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all; that Word* (saith he) *ye know, which was published throughout all Judea and Galilee, after the Baptism which John preached:* meaning, that the reconciling and making Peace between God and Man by Jesus Christ, was a Doctrine declar'd by the Prophets of old, and since publish'd by St. John in all the Regions round about, of which they could not be altogether ignorant. From this general Account of the Christian Doctrine, he descends to Particulars, telling them, *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with Power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil: for God was with him.*

Anointing in Scripture was an antient Ceremony of Consecration, and signify'd the setting apart or ordaining any to some special Use or Office; and this was us'd to Things as well as Persons. Jacob poured Oil on the Top of a Pillar, and thereby consecrated it as Holy unto the Lord; Gen. 28. 18. Moses anointed the Tabernacle, and the Vessels belonging to it, and thereby dedicated them to Holy Uses: But the principal Anointing refer'd to Persons, who were by that Ceremony set apart and consecrated to some High and Holy Office. Thus Kings, and Priests, and Prophets were wont to be anointed and set apart to their several Functions: Saul was anointed King of Israel, and so was David and Solomon, and all the succeeding Kings of Israel and Judah: which Ceremony continues at the Inauguration of Princes to this day. The Prophets likewise were anointed with Oil, as a Token of Consecration to their Holy Office. Accordingly Peter here tells them, that Christ, who was both King, and Priest, and Prophet to his Church, was anointed with the Oil of Gladness above his Fellows; having a more plentiful Effusion of it, than was ever bestow'd on any other: for God anointed this Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with Power; that is, with a liberal Portion of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, with a Power of working Miracles to qualify him for the Office of Mediator. And being thus furnish'd with a double Portion of the Spirit, and receiving the Gifts and Graces of it in the highest measure, he went about doing good both to the Bodies and Souls of Men, seeking out Opportunities of shewing

shewing Mercy and Pity, curing all manner of Diseases, making the Lame to walk, the Blind to see, and the Deaf to hear, cleansing the Lepers, raising the Dead, casting out evil Spirits, and healing all that were possess'd or oppress'd of the Devil: *for God was with him, to bless, prosper and reward him.*

That they might not doubt of these great Truths, he tells them, that *we his Apostles are witnesses of all these things, which he did both in the Land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; which were so publickly known, and in the Mouths of so many, that they could not be wholly Strangers to them.*

Moreover, he acquaints them with the Way and Manner, how this great Work of Man's Salvation was accomplish'd; and that was by the Passion and Resurrection of the Son of God: *for he whom the Jews slew and hanged on a Tree, him God raised up the third Day.* He by dying underwent the Punishment due to our Sin; and by the Jews slaying and hanging him on a Tree, fulfilled the Prophecies concerning the manner of his Death: and by both satisfy'd Divine Justice, and redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us; *for as many as were under the Law, were under the Curse, as it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in every thing that is written in the Book of the Law to do it.* And because we had all broken the Law, he was nail'd to the cursed Tree, to remove the Curse from us; as it is written, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a Tree.*

Now this same Jesus (saith he) whom they crucify'd, *God raised up the third Day;* and by releasing him from the Prison of the Grave, shew'd that our Debt was satisfy'd, and that it should not long detain our mortal Bodies: for by his Death he hath pluck'd out the Sting of Death, and by his Rising again hath rais'd us to Glory and Immortality.

To confirm them in the stedfast Belief of his Resurrection, he tells them, that *God shewed him openly;* he expos'd him to publick View, and caus'd him to appear, *not indeed to all the People, to make it an idle Rumour, but to Witnesses chosen before of God.* This Manifestation was not made to the whole Body of the Jews, who wilfully rejected him, but to some Persons selected for that purpose, and those were his Apostles and Disciples; whom, as he made choice of as the peculiar Witnesses of his Miracles and all that he did when he was alive, so did he more especially single them out by God's Appointment to be the Witnesses of his Resurrection: to which end, he admitted them to eat and drink with them; for *when*
they

they gave him a piece of a broiled Fish, and of an Honey-Comb, he took it, and did eat before them after he arose from the Dead: *Luke 24. 42.*

Beside, he gave them many infallible Proofs and Signs that he rose in the same Body in which he died; for when he made his first Appearance to his Disciples, 'tis said they were terrify'd and affrighted, as if they had seen a Spirit: but our Saviour, to remove all their Doubts and Fears, shew'd them the Holes made in his Hands and Feet by the Nails that fasten'd him to the Cross, and took St. Thomas's Hand, and thrust it into the Hole made in his Side by the Soldier's Spear: by which they plainly saw that it was he, and so were no longer faithless, but believing; calling him, *My Lord and my God.*

And having thus clearly convinc'd them of the Truth and Reality of his Resurrection, he commanded them to preach it every where unto the People, and to testify, that it is he who was ordained of God to be the Judg of Quick and Dead. So he tells them himself, *Mat. 28. 18, &c.* saying, *All Power is given unto me in Heaven, and in Earth: Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and particularly to proclaim to the World, that Christ crucify'd is rais'd to God's right Hand, to be the Judg of all that die before, or are found alive at the Day of Doom.*

This Power was given him as a Reward for his Sufferings, and a Recompence for all that he hath done for Man's Salvation, that he may punish those Unbelievers that refuse the Tenders of his Mercy, and exalt those to Honour that believe and receive the Terms of Reconciliation: To which ends the Apostle tells us, that *God hath appointed a Day wherein he will judg the World in Righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; of which he hath given Assurance, in that he raised him from the Dead.*

And elsewhere; *We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad; 2 Cor. 5. 10.* Christ then was rais'd to be the Judg of all the World, to the great Comfort of all good Men, and the Terror of the bad: To him give all the Prophets witness; meaning, that this is he of whom the Prophets foretold those things, and in whom the Apostles declare that they are all fulfilled: *That thro his Name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive Remission of Sins.* Where reference is had to that New Covenant,

nant, which Christ, by the Merits of his Death, and Virtue of his Resurrection, purchas'd of his Father, and enter'd into with us: the Conditions whereof are Faith and Repentance; which if we perform on our part, we may rest assur'd, that whatever our Sins are, tho many and great, they shall be forgiven us of our heavenly Father, who is well pleas'd in his beloved Son, and with us too in and thro him. Which great Actions of his, in our stead, and for our sake, ought never to be forgotten, but still to be remember'd by us at the proper Seasons, and in the due Manner that he himself hath appointed: Which God grant, for the Merits of him who hath accomplish'd all this for us; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory now and for evermore. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE LXV.

The G O S P E L for Easter-Monday.

St. Luke xxiv. 13—36.

Behold, two of his Disciples went that same Day to a Village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore Furlongs: And they talked together of all these things that had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them; but their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day contains an Account of a Conference held between two Disciples concerning Christ and his Resurrection; at which Conference Jesus came *incognito*, and join'd himself to their Company, tho they knew him not, till after some time he discover'd himself to them, and confirm'd them in the Certainty of what they before doubted, *viz.* that he was indeed risen from the Dead.

The

The Account of it begins with these words; *Behold, two of his Disciples went that same day to a Village called Emmaus, &c.* where we have the Persons, the Time, the Place, and other Circumstances relating to this Affair.

For the Persons concern'd in it, they were two of Christ's Disciples: who they were, is not here particularly mention'd, nor indeed in any other of the Evangelists; but 'tis suppos'd they were *Peter* and *John*, who both went to the Sepulchre where our Saviour was laid, and finding not the Body of Jesus, and beholding nothing but the Linen Clothes wrapt up and laid together by themselves, they departed and went their way, wondring in themselves at what was come to pass. However, 'tis thought they met again.

The same Day, that is, the Day of his Resurrection, or the Time on which he rose: at which time they travelled together to a Village called Emmaus, that was from Jerusalem about threescore Furlongs; which, computing eight Furlongs to a Mile, was about seven Miles distant from Jerusalem. In the way as they went, they talked together of all these things which had happened; which was then, no doubt, the publick Discourse in every one's Mouth: the News of his Resurrection being openly declar'd and told about by Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and Mary the Mother of James, and other Women with them, who were early in the Morning at the Sepulchre, and seeking the Body of Christ, were told by two Men in shining Garments, that is, by two Angels in human Shape, that he was not there, for he was risen, pointing to the Place where the Lord lay: which thing being thus nois'd abroad, occasion'd these Disciples conferring and talking about it; in which they shew'd something of Faith, tho but weak and imperfect, and mingled with many Doubtings: yea, some of the Apostles look'd upon the Report of the Women but as idle Tales, and believed them not, ver. 11. But these Disciples had some better Thoughts of it, tho not without some Misgivings.

And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. Our Saviour perceiving the Weakness, and withal the Sincerity of their Faith, and that they were very willing to find out the Truth of this Matter, join'd himself with them, to hear and direct their Reasoning, but yet so as not presently to make himself known unto them; for 'tis said, *Their Eyes were holden, that they should not know him.* Their Eyes were either dazzled by a Divine Power, or some other way hinder'd from discerning

discerning who or what he was; as it happened to *Mary Magdalen*, who saw *Jesus standing*, but knew not it was he, *John 20. 14.* And so it was with the Disciples, *Peter, and Thomas, and Nathaniel, and two others*, who saw *Jesus standing on the Shore*, but knew not that it was *Jesus*, *John 21. 4.* that is, he was either so disguis'd, that they could not see thro it, or their Eyes were so held by God's Power or Pleasure, that tho they saw a Man, yet they could not discern who it was. This was the Case of these two Disciples; our Saviour Christ struck in as a Stranger into their Company, and industriously conceal'd himself, partly to prevent Surprize, and partly to prepare them for, and gain the more upon them by a gradual revealing himself unto them.

As they went on their way, our Saviour perceiving them to be not a little troubled or dismay'd, said unto them, *What manner of Communications are these, that you have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?* where he enquires into the Cause or Occasion of their Sadness, or what it was that thus troubled them. To whom one of them, nam'd *Cleophas*, reply'd, *Art thou only a Stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?* This *Cleophas* is suppos'd to be the Brother of *Joseph*, the Virgin *Mary's* Husband, and so the reputed Uncle of Christ: he wondring at this Stranger's Ignorance in Matters so generally known and talk'd of every where, asking what those things were, they answer'd him, *Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the People*; one whose Doctrine and Miracles plainly shew'd him to be a Divine Person, or an extraordinary Teacher come from God; for none could do the Works that he did, except God were with him. And yet this heavenly and excellent Person, so approv'd of God, and applauded of all the People, met with the most barbarous and inhuman Treatment from the World of any Person in it; for the *Chief Priests and Rulers delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, to be condemned to Death*: and tho he could find no fault in him, yet pass'd Sentence upon him, and yielded him up to be crucified; which hath occasion'd great Sorrow and Sadness to all his Followers: for we trusted (say they) that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel; that is, we look'd upon him as the true promis'd Messiah, that should restore again the Kingdom to *Israel*, and deliver us from all our Enemies. The Greatness of his Works, and the Goodness of his Sayings were both such, as to raise our Expectations, and made us fix both our Eyes and Hearts upon him, as the Redeemer

deemer of *Israel*. But alas! his Death hath cut off all our Hopes, and left us nothing but Disappointment and Despair. Here the Faith of the Apostles seem'd to fail them, and their Hopes to be wholly extinguish'd: and this, thro the Prevalency of Temptation, may sometimes happen to the best of Men. Our Saviour pray'd for St. *Peter*, that his Faith might not fail, which was in great danger from the Siftings of Satan, and the Trials of the World. And the Apostle cautions every one, that *thinks that he standeth, to take heed lest he fall*: And elsewhere, *Thou standest by Faith, but be not high-minded, but fear*; presume not too much upon thy own Strength, but call in the Assistance of Heaven, by making thy Request known unto God.

But that which most stagger'd the Faith of the Disciples, was, that *beside all this, that was the third Day after his Death*, on which he told them of his rising again; of which having no Tidings, they were almost ready to give up all for lost.

But whilst they were uttering this despairing Language, *Certain Women* (say they) *that were of our Company made us astonished*; who being early that Morning at the Sepulchre, spake many strange and wonderful things, saying unto us, that when looking into the Sepulchre they found not the Body of Jesus, a Vision of Angels appeared to them, which said, that he was alive: whereupon certain of them who were with them went to the Sepulchre, and found it even as the Women had said, but him they saw not. Now here our Lord began to make some Discovery of himself to them; which he did by reasoning the Matter with them with some kind of Smartness, sharply rebuking the Slowness and Backwardness of their Faith, and saying unto them, *O Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffer'd these things, and to enter into his Glory? Were not all these Sufferings of the Messias, at which you seem to stumble, plainly foretold by the Prophets of old? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*: letting them know, that *Moses* spake of a great Prophet, that should come in the latter Days, and reveal to them the whole Will of God; and that *Isaias* foretold, that this Person should be despised and rejected of Men, and be brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter: That *Daniel* prophesy'd, that the *Messiah* was to be cut off for the Sins of the People. And how *David* and *Zacharias* foretold the Manner of it; the one saying, *They pierced my Hands*

Hands and my Feet; the other, They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn over him: both which Prophecies relate to his Crucifixion.

These and many other Scriptures he expounded to them with that Clearness and Vivacity, that they began to suspect, that either this was he, or one sent before to prepare the way for him. However, he would not yet discover himself, but held them a little longer in suspense: To which end,

As they drew nigh to Emmaus, the Village whither they went, he made as tho he would have gone farther, not to dissemble with them, but to try their Sincerity: But they, by their Importunity, constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards Evening, and the Day is far spent; so they prevail'd with him, and he went in to tarry with them. True Goodness is exorable, and easy to be entreated to reasonable things.

And it came to pass, as he sate at Meat with them, that he took Bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them: where we may observe the Freedom of his Conversation; he made no difficulty to sit at Meat with his Inferiors, but ate and drank with them, and freely convers'd with all Mankind, tho the Pride of the Pharisees objected against it, thinking it beneath the Dignity of the Messias to be so familiar.

Again, From his taking Bread and blessing it before they eat, he hath given an Example of beginning our Meals with craving a Blessing, and ending them with giving of Thanks, which we call saying of Grace: this he was wont to do on all Occasions; as in the Miracle of the Loaves, all the Evangelists speak of his blessing and consecrating the Bread before he brake or distributed it. This is an Act of Piety whereby we own God to be the Author and Bestower of all good Gifts, shewing our Thankfulness for them, and depending upon his Blessing for the nourishing our Body, and sanctifying the Use of them to the Soul. Hence the Apostle tells us, that *every Creature of God is good, if it be received with Thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer: 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5.* where we have a free Liberty granted us to all God's Creatures, provided we receive them with thankful Hearts, and implore his Blessing in the Use of them; which is a holy, reasonable and acceptable Service.

But to go on; as Christ sat at Meat with them, the Disciples, either by the accustom'd Form of Blessing us'd by him, or by some particular Words or Actions about the Bread, began to discover who he was: so the next words inform us; *And their Eyes were opened, and they knew him. They whose*
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Eyes were before held, that they should not know him, now open'd, by which they plainly saw it was Christ. And here we may well think, what Transports of Joy possess'd the Breasts of these Disciples, upon the Sight and Knowledge of our Saviour.

Joseph's making himself known to be alive to his Brethren, who had many ways contriv'd his Death, and his being rais'd to great Honour to save them who would have destroy'd him, was but a faint Resemblance of Christ's Discovery of himself, to be alive by his Resurrection from the Dead for the Salvation of Mankind, for whose Sins he died. And both of them afford fit matter for our Joy and Meditations on the Subject of this Day. The Disciples seem'd to despair, and to give up all for lost by his Death, their Hopes being in a manner swallow'd up and buried with him in his Grave; but they all reviv'd by this Manifestation of himself to them, and receiv'd a new Life by his Resurrection: which made them ever after venture their own Lives, in attesting the Truth and Certainty they had of his. And now having fully satisfy'd them in the Belief of this great Truth, upon which all his Doctrine and their Expectations depended, he left them, *and vanish'd out of their sight*. How, or by what means he disappear'd, as it is not here related, so neither will it become us too curiously to enquire.

When he was gone, they recollected the Discourse that pass'd between them in the Way, *and said one to another, Did not our Hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he open'd to us the Scriptures?* And this may shew us the great Benefit of Holy Conference one with another about Sacred Things, especially in wise and good Company; how much it tends to the enlightning of the Mind with true Knowledge, the firing of the Heart with true Zeal, and inflaming both with fervent Devotion: which should teach us in some proper Seasons, to prefer pious and religious Discourse before the idle and vain Chat, that too much abound in common Conversation. The Disciples found a Warmth in their Affections, and good Motions stirring in them by our Saviour's pious Conference with them; and we might find the like Effect, by using and attending more to holy Communication.

Hereupon the Disciples *rose up the same Hour, and went to Jerusalem*; where finding the Eleven gather'd together, and those that associated with them, they said unto them, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appear'd to Simon*: meaning-

ing, that there could be now no farther doubt of the Truth of his Resurrection, having appear'd to *Simon Peter*, the chief of the Apostles; to which *St. Paul* refers in *1 Cor. 15. 5.* withal *telling them what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of Bread*; that is, either by his usual Form of blessing it, or by some other Actions he was wont to use about it.

This is the Sum of the Gospel for this Day, from which we may learn many useful Lessons. As,

1st, Not to be too easy and credulous in Matters of great Importance, but to use our utmost Study and Diligence in the Search and Inquiry after Truth: so the Disciples did by hearing the Scriptures expounded to them, with other means of attaining Knowledg. Our Saviour bids us to *search the Scriptures, for they testify of him, and contain the Words of Eternal Life*: and the *Bereans* are commended for searching whether things were so as they were related. This is the way to have our Faith well-grounded, and not to be carried about with every wind of Doctrine.

2^{dly}, We are taught here, not to be too slow or backward in believing upon sufficient Evidence. This is here blam'd in the Disciples, which should make us yield to the Evidence of Truth.

3^{dly}, We see here the great Advantage of Holy Conference; for the Hearts of these Disciples burnt with Zeal, while our Saviour talk'd with them; and we should find the same by the like holy and heavenly Discourse.

Lastly, Let us get our Hearts firmly establish'd in the Belief of Christ's Resurrection, upon which all our Faith and Hopes depend. *Amen.*





DISCOURSE LXVI.

The EPISTLE for *Easter-Tuesday*.

Acts xiii. 26—42.

Men and Brethren, Children of the Stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the Word of this Salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerufalem, and their Rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the Voices of the Prophets, which are read every Sabbath-Day, they have fuffill'd them in condemning him, &c.

THIS Epistle for the Day is a part of St. Paul's Sermon, preach'd to the Jews in the Synagogue of *Antioch*; wherein, after craving Audience, he declares how God Almighty first gather'd and govern'd his Church, chusing the House of *Israel* to be his peculiar People, and the Lot of his own Inheritance; shewing how he deliver'd them with a high hand out of the Bondage of *Egypt*, and led them thro the Wilderness into the Land of *Canaan*, which he divided among them by Lot. After which, he govern'd them by Judges for the space of four hundred and fifty Years, until *Samuel* the Prophet; when the People desiring a King, he gave them *Saul*, the Son of *Cis*, to be their King: whom God for his Disobedience to his Command remov'd, and rais'd up *David* the Son of *Jesse* to reign over them; who being a Man after his own Heart, and fulfilling all his Will, God promis'd out of his Seed to raise up unto *Israel* a Saviour Jesus, who should save his People from their Sins. And to prepare the way for him, he sent *John* as his Fore-runner, to baptize and preach the Doctrine of Repentance to all the People of *Israel*. And lest they should take him for this Saviour, he publickly declar'd, that *he was not he*: But behold! (saith he) *there cometh one after me, the Shoes of whose Feet he was not worthy to loose.* Now

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The Apostle having thus put them in mind of the many great and particular Blessings, which God had heap'd on the People of *Israel*; he addressees to them in the Epistle for this Day, which begins with these words: *Men and Brethren, Children of the Stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God; to you is the Word of this Salvation sent.* He had before told them of a Saviour that was to spring out of the Loins and Lineage of *David*, together with the Salvation that was to be wrought by him; and here he acquaints them with the Persons to whom this Salvation was first to be preach'd, and that was to the *Jewish Nation, of whom as concerning the Flesh Christ came.* And therefore the Apostle here salutes them with the Title of *Men and Brethren*, they being his Country-men and Kinsfolk: And because they loved to be thought and call'd *the Seed of Abraham*, he gratifies them with that Appellation, stiling them *Children of the Stock of Abraham*; which he enlarges to all *whosoever among them feared God.*

These were the Persons that were first favour'd with God's sending his Son, together with the Offers of Salvation by him. Christ himself declar'd, that he was not sent at first to *any but the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, *Mat. 15. 24.* And the same Commission he gave to his Apostles, to go to them of the *Jewish Nation* before any others, *Mat. 10. 6.* But when they rejected Christ, and thrust Salvation from them, then were the Apostles order'd to turn from them and go to the *Gentiles*: after which, all that fear'd God and wrought Righteousness, were without respect of Persons accepted with him; and to all such, whether *Jew or Gentile*, is the Word of this Salvation sent. So *St. John* speaks concerning Christ, that *he came unto his own*; meaning the *Jews*, who were of his own Stock and Kindred: *but his own receiv'd him not*, that is, the generality of them rejected him. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believ'd in his Name*; *John 1. 11, 12.*

Having mention'd the *Jews* rejecting of Christ for the Messiah, the Apostle adds something touching the Reason, Manner, and End of it: *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their Rulers* (saith he) *because they knew him not, nor the Voices of the Prophets, which are read every Sabbath-Day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.* The Sense of which Words is, that the Rulers and Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* (meaning the Sanhedrim and the People) not know-

ing Christ to be the Messiah; which they might easily have understood from the Speeches and Predictions of the Prophets, which were every Sabbath-Day read in their ears; have thro a wilful and affected Ignorance adjudg'd him to Death, and thereby fulfill'd the Prophecies of his Death and Sufferings with their own hands: which they could not or would not understand. To this St. Paul elsewhere refers, saying, that *the Princes and Rulers of the World knew him not; for had they known him, they would not have crucify'd the Lord of Glory.* 1 Cor. 2. 8.

This he farther aggravates, from the Innocency of his Person, and the Causelessness of his Sufferings: for *tho they found no cause of Death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.* When they clamour'd for his Crucifixion, Pilate ask'd them, *Why, what Evil hath he done?* And when he declar'd that he found no fault in him, they still persisted in their Cry, and in a manner forc'd him by their Importunity to condemn him to be crucify'd. And having thus by their malicious Accusations fulfill'd all that was written of him, and finish'd the Work of Man's Redemption, he yielded to Death, and gave up the ghost. After which, *they took him down from the Tree, and laid him in a Sepulchre.* The Officers appointed for that purpose took his Body from the Cross, and put it in a Tomb prepar'd for it; which they seal'd up, and guarded by a Watch, and by all imaginable ways secur'd from being taken away. And yet after all this Care and Cost, God (saith he) *raised him from the Dead.* And to prevent all Doubts and false Reports in this matter, he continu'd for the space of forty days upon the earth; during which time he was often seen, not only by his Disciples, who did eat and drink, and converse with him, but of many others that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his Witnesses unto the People, and were ready to testify the truth of it to all the Jews: which things he here urg'd with great Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit.

And now the Apostle having clear'd and confirm'd these Matters of Fact, he proceeds to the many great Blessings and Benefits that accrew to us by his Death and Resurrection; saying in the following words, *We declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their Children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

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Herein is set forth the glad Tidings of the Gospel, how the Promise made to *Abraham*, that in his Seed should all the Nations of the Earth be blessed, was in Christ, who descended from his Stock, made good to all that tread in the steps of his Faith, and do the Works of their Father *Abraham*. And this was done and certify'd to us by his rising again from the Dead, of which *Isaac's* being rescu'd from Death after he was doom'd to be sacrific'd, was a Type or Representation; and more clearly by that Prophecy of *David* in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: which must be understood not so much of the Day of his Birth, as of his Resurrection, when he was seated on his Throne, to govern and save his People; having thereby destroy'd the last Enemy, which is Death, and restor'd his Followers to the Hopes of eternal Life.

This he farther enlarges upon in the next words, saying, *As concerning God's raising him up from the Dead, now no more to return to Corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure Mercies of David.* Christ's Resurrection was to a State of Immortality, never to die again; not like that of *Lazarus* and others, whose Resurrection was but a short Reprieve from the Grave, to return to it again: but Christ being rais'd from the Dead, *dies no more, Death hath no more dominion over him.* Which Privilege he confers on all his faithful Followers, to be rais'd to a Life immortal, not liable to a second Death, or subject to Mortality, but to be instated in a Condition of endless Life, and advanc'd to an everlasting Kingdom. This is here express'd by *the sure Mercies of David*; which, in *Isa. 55. 3.* from whence it is quoted, is call'd *an everlasting Covenant*, or the Promise of an everlasting Kingdom to be continu'd to *David* and his Seed for evermore. Which cannot be meant of a temporal or earthly Kingdom, for that hath sometimes fail'd in his Posterity; but of that spiritual and heavenly Kingdom promis'd and vested in Christ, the Son of *David*, of whom it is said, that *the Lord God shall give unto him the Throne of his Father David, and he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever; and of his Kingdom there shall be no end. Isa. 9. 7.* This Promise or Prophecy, *St. Peter*, in his Sermon on the Day of Pentecost, plainly applies unto Christ, *Acts 2. 29, 30. Men and Brethren* (saith he) *let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this day: therefore being a*
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Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruits of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne; he seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither did his Body see Corruption. Wherefore he saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption, Psal. 16. 11. which Passage must necessarily have relation unto Christ, for it cannot properly belong to David, as the next words declare: For David, after he had serv'd his own Generation by the Will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid to his Fathers, and saw Corruption: He died a natural Death, and rose not again, his Body putrifying in the Earth.

But he whom God raised again, saw no Corruption; that is, Christ in whom this Prophecy was fulfill'd, rose again the third Day; the time before the Bodies are wont to putrify, and so was not in any measure corrupted. This was a peculiar Privilege belonging to Christ's Body, which because it did no Sin, it saw no Corruption: but our Bodies, by reason of Sin, are permitted to putrify, and made subject to Corruption. However, Christ by the Power and Virtue of his Resurrection, will change our vile Bodies, that they may be like unto his glorious Body; for tho they are sown in Corruption, they shall be rais'd in Incorruption, and these mortal Bodies shall put on Immortality. And then shall be brought to pass the Saying that is written, Death is swallow'd up in Victory. This made the Apostle triumph over it in that insulting strain, O Death! where is thy Sting? O Grave! where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. These are some of the inestimable Benefits obtain'd for us by Christ's Resurrection. For which reason, St. Paul, for the greater Conviction of the Jews, thus bespeaks them; Be it known unto you therefore, Men and Brethren, that thro this Man is preached unto you the Forgiveness of Sins: meaning, that this Messias or Mediator between God and Man, is the only means of making our Peace and Reconciliation with God; for he alone can do away Sin, the only Make-bate between us. By his Death he hath taken away the Enmity, and blotted out the Hand-writing that was against us; and by his Life and Doctrine hath chalk'd out a way for penitent Sinners to find Mercy and Pardon from him. In short, he only hath the Word of Reconciliation, which
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he committed to his Apostles and their Successors in the Work of the Ministry, and hath order'd them in his Name and thro his Merits to preach the Forgiveness of Sins; which is to be obtain'd no other way. For

By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. The Law of *Moses* consisting mostly of Types and Shadows of good things to come, could not make the Comers thereunto perfect, nor by the Works of the Law can any Flesh living be justify'd. But the Righteousness of Christ is absolutely perfect and compleat, and being by the Grace and Favour of God imputed unto us, is every way sufficient for our Justification.

And now the Apostle, in the Close of this Epistle for the Day, cautions the *Jews* against persisting any longer in despising the Person, and rejecting the Doctrine of our Blessed Saviour; and wills them rather to receive and embrace the Gospel, as 'tis now preach'd and confirm'd to them by Christ's Resurrection from the Dead: lest by refusing this way of Salvation, so well attested and manifested to them, they bring upon themselves some remarkable and astonishing Destruction, as a just Punishment for the despising the Riches of God's Grace and Mercy, so freely afforded and offer'd to them: *Beware therefore (saith he) lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the Prophets. Behold, ye Despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a Work in your days, a Work which you shall in no wise believe, tho a Man declare it unto you.* These words were spoken by the Prophet *Habakkuk*, to those obstinate *Jews*, who went on impenitently in their Sins, against all the Calls and Messages of the Prophets sent to them for their Amendment, till a heavy Destruction came upon them by the *Chaldeans*, who spoil'd them of their Goods, and carry'd them captive into a strange Land; a Work which they would not believe, tho they were told it, till it fell upon them: and therefore the Prophet bid them to *regard, and wonder marvellously* at their own Folly and Misery, *Hab. 1. 5.* In like manner, the Apostle here calls upon some of the same Race of the *Jews*, who follow'd them in their Infidelity, to take heed of resisting the Doctrine of Christ, or despising his Messengers, and holding out obstinately against the preaching of the Gospel; for in so doing they would find some incredible Judgment befall them, which would be a matter of wonder and great amazement to them: which, as appears

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after, was, first, The removing the Gospel from them, and carrying it to the *Gentiles*: and, secondly, the *Romans* breaking in upon them, and destroying both their Temple and City; which things they would not believe, till they came upon them.

For the first, *Paul* and *Barnabas* told these unbelieving and despising *Jews*, in the 46th Verse of this Chapter, that tho it was necessary that the Word of God should be first preach'd to them, yet seeing they put it from them, and judg'd themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, lo! we turn to the *Gentiles*; for so hath the Lord commanded us. Isa. 49. 6.

For the second, our Saviour himself told them, That the Days should come, that their Enemies should cast a Trench about them, and compass them round on every side, and lay their City even with the ground; and because they stoned the Prophets that were sent unto them, should not leave one Stone upon another: Luke 19. 46. which things after came to pass.

And 'twere well, if some such Unbelievers and Despisers were not to be found among us. But alas! there are too many who would be thought Christians, and yet not only deny but deride a crucify'd Saviour, and utterly reject all Divine Revelations. 'Twas the Saying of an Atheistical Pope, *Quantum nobis profuit hac fabula de Christo?* And there are some still among our selves, who think the History of the Life, and Death, and Resurrection of Christ, to be no better than a Fable, and stile the preaching of them by the name of Priestcraft; ridiculing the Mysteries of the Gospel, and despising the Dispensers of them. What heavy Judgments these things may bring upon us, God only knows, and few will believe, tho we declare it unto them. The *Jews*, for their Infidelity in these matters, have been a forlorn scatter'd People ever since. The seven Churches of *Asia*, for the Contempt of Christ and his Ministers, were punish'd with the removing the Candlestick, or the Light of the Gospel, from them, and remain the Monuments of divine Vengeance to this day. And how shall we escape, if we neglect or contemn so great Salvation? Let us then take the warning of these Examples, and learn to repent and believe the Gospel, lest we likewise perish: So shall we engage the Providence of God to stand by us, and to avert the Evils that must otherwise befall us; which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LXVII.

The GOSPEL for Easter-Tuesday.

St. Luke xxiv. 36——48.

Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrify'd and affrighted, and suppos'd that they had seen a Spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do Thoughts arise in your Hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self, &c.

THE Gospel for this Day being much the same with that appointed for the first Sunday after *Easter*, I shall speak but briefly of this, and refer the Reader to that.

It begins with Christ's first Appearance to his Apostles after his Resurrection, which was in the Evening of the Day on which he rose, when *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them*. St. John tells us, that *the Doors were shut*, where they met, for fear of the Jews; who could not bear the News of his Resurrection, but labour'd by all ways of Subtlety and Terror to stifle the Report of it. However, Christ by an Act of his Divine Power open'd the Doors, and came in among them, and saith unto them, *Peace be unto you*: which was the common Salutation us'd by Jews and Christians to those they met with Morning and Evening, and was not a meer idle Compliment; in which sense he forbid his Disciples to *salute any in the Way*, Luke 10. 4. but a real Benediction or Wish of all Health and Prosperity; Peace including in it all manner of Blessings. And therefore St. John tells us, he repeated it twice, saying again, *Peace be unto you*, John 20. 19, 21.

But the Disciples being at first surpriz'd at the sight or hearing of him, *were terrify'd and affrighted, and suppos'd that they had seen a Spirit*. They took him for a Spectrum
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or Apparition, and no real Body ; and so were a little scar'd and amaz'd at the Vision. And this gave occasion to some Hereticks after, to affirm that Christ was not the same Person after the Resurrection that he was before, but took only an aerial Body, in which he appear'd for a while, and then vanish'd away. But Christ to remove this Fright of the Apostles, said unto them, *Why are ye thus troubled? and why do Thoughts arise in your Hearts?*

And then to confute all Errors and Mistakes about the Reality of his Body, he submits himself to the most palpable Proofs and Demonstrations of a Body, that the Weakness of their Faith could demand or desire ; saying, *Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.* Wherein he condescends to give them all imaginable Satisfaction by the Testimony of their own Senses ; for *when he had thus spoken, he shew'd them his Hands and his Feet :* Giving *Thomas* leave, at another Appearance, to see and feel the Prints of the Nails made both in his Hands and Feet, and thrusting his Hand into the Hole made in his Side by the Soldier's Spear ; which was enough to convince the greatest Infidel in so plain a Truth. But yet the exceeding great Transports of Joy at so strange and sudden a Discovery of himself, fill'd them indeed with Wonder, but still left them a little diffident ; for 'tis said, *they yet believ'd not for Joy, and wonder'd.* And finding a little Distrust still remaining, he, to put an end to all their Doubts, said unto them, *Have ye here any Meat?* calling for something to eat, to shew that he was nourished by the same Sustenance with themselves ; *And they gave him a Piece of a broiled Fish, and of a Honey-comb, which he took and did eat before them.* By all which we see what pains he seem'd to take, to satisfy them of the Truth and Reality of his Body, and that he was the same Person he was before his Death and Resurrection.

And here, by the way, we may learn some of the many and great Absurdities of the Popish Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

As, 1st, From Christ's coming and standing in the midst of his Disciples, we learn that Christ's Body had the same Postures and Dimensions with ours ; having all the Properties of a true Body, as Length, Breadth, and Thickness remaining in him, and so was circumscrib'd and confin'd to Place as we are ; and consequently cannot be in many thousand

and Places at the same time: which must be, if he be corporally present wherever the Holy Eucharist is celebrated. When Christ was upon Earth, we read of his moving from Place to Place, and from one Country to another; but never of his being in two or more Places at once: and when he ascended up into Heaven, we are told, that *the Heavens must receive him till the time of the Restitution of all things*, or the time of his last coming to Judgment. So that Ubiquity being repugnant to the Nature of a Body, and contrary to the Sense and Tenour of Holy Scripture, cannot without great Absurdity be believ'd, and much less impos'd as an Article of Faith necessary to Salvation. Nor yet,

2dly, Can our Saviour's Discourse here encourage any to think, that a Priest by pronouncing two or three words, can turn a Piece of Bread into Flesh and Blood, and make a Wafer to become a human Body. This some have derided as a sort of Conjuring, the Terms of *Hocus Pocus* us'd in it being a Contraction of *Hoc est Corpus*. Nor may we imagine that Christ is so easily to be brought down from Heaven by a Word's speaking, for this would multiply the one Body he receiv'd from the Virgin *Mary* into many more, yea, into as many as there are Communion in the Christian World; which is a gross Absurdity and Contradiction to affirm.

3dly, From Christ's appealing to the Senses of his Disciples about the Truth and Reality of his Body, we learn that the Senses are the most proper Judges in such Cases; and to weaken the Testimony or destroy the Evidence of the Senses, is to leave us in doubt whether Christ's Body ever rose from the Dead: *Handle me and see me*, (saith our Saviour) *for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*. Where the whole Stress of his Argument lies upon their seeing and feeling of him: So that if we cannot see or feel any thing in the Eucharist but real Bread and Wine, we may well enough conclude, there is no real Body or Blood of Christ there; for Flesh and Bones are both visible and palpable, and where neither of these Qualities are to be found, there can be no Proof of a Body, but only of a Spirit or Apparition. So that the Disbelief of our Senses, and weakning the Testimony of them, would invalidate all our Saviour's Discourse in this matter. Yea, farther, the denying the Testimony of the Senses would take away all the Evidence of the Truth of Christ's Doctrine,

Doctrine, and undermine the whole Christian Religion: for the main Proof we have of it, is from the Miracles that were done to confirm it; and the sole Proof of those Miracles was from the Testimony of those that saw them, and were Eye and Ear-witnesses of them. But if our Senses are not to be believ'd or trusted, there is an End of all the Proof and Evidence we have for the Truth of our Religion: which should teach us to beware of such Doctrines, as are attended with such bad Consequents.

But to proceed to the next words of this Gospel, *which are the same that he spake unto them, whilst he was alive with them, That all things must be fulfill'd which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him*; for they all spake of him, and foretold what after came to pass.

And having open'd the bodily Eyes of his Disciples, to behold his corporeal Presence; *he then open'd the Eyes of their Understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures*: especially those that related to himself, for *he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behov'd Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the third Day*. Thus it is written in the Book of the Prophets; and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, upon a double Account:

1. For the fulfilling of the Scriptures, which otherwise could not have been true; for God having declar'd such things concerning the Messias, and made them the distinguishing Marks for the World to know him by, they became necessary for the vindicating of the Truth of God's Word, who had so long before given warning of them by the Prophets. Again,

2. These things were necessary to answer the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledg of God concerning the Way and Manner of Man's Redemption. And therefore thus it behov'd Christ to suffer and rise again, that by his Death and Resurrection he might in all Points suit the Character of the Messiah, and fulfil the Scheme and Design of Man's Redemption; which could not so well be answer'd by any other, as by these Means.

And, Lastly, *That Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preach'd in his Name among all Nations*; which could not be effected but by his Sufferings and Satisfaction. And these things were to begin at Jerusalem, as they themselves were Witnesses.

Upon

Upon the whole then, let us from hence learn to establish our Minds in the Belief of these Truths, and not only so, but adore the Power, admire the Wisdom, and thankfully acknowledg the Goodness of God in the whole Transaction.



DISCOURSE LXVIII.

The EPISTLE for the first Sunday after *Easter*.

I St. John v. 4—13.

Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World; and this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith. Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? &c.

THE Church antiently observ'd the *Octave*, or eighth Day after the great Festivals, which was commonly the Sunday following them, and had usually the same or like Service to the foregoing Festival. Accordingly this Day being the *Octave*, or the eighth Day from *Easter*, call'd therefore *Low-Easter*, continues the Memorial of Christ's Resurrection, which hath some joyful Days to follow it, in honour of that high Solemnity; the thing we celebrate thereon being the main Pillar of our Faith, and the Foundation of all our Hopes: for if Christ had not dy'd, we had been yet in our Sins; and if he had not risen again, all our Hopes had been bury'd with him: but *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ*.

The Collect for the Day minds us of the Reason and Motive of Christ's Death, which was for our Sins; and likewise of the End of his Resurrection, which was for our Justification: and thence teaches us to pray for Grace, so to put away the Leven of Malice and Wickedness, that we may alway serve him in Pureness of Living and Truth. *Subtable hereunto,*

The

The Epistle for the Day minds us of that new Birth we have by Christ's Resurrection, being thereby rais'd from the Death of Sin to a Life of Grace, together with the blessed Fruits and Effects of it; one whereof is a Victory over the World, and a Power over other ghostly Enemies: so the Epistle begins, *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World*; where by being *born of God*, we are to understand that new Birth we receive in Baptism by the Resurrection of Christ, by which we are said to be *begotten again to a lively Hope*. St. John styles it, a being *born again of Water and the Spirit*, without which there is *no entering into the Kingdom of God*; John 3. 5. St. Paul expresses it by the *washing of Regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; Tit. 3. 5, 6. meaning, that the Spirit of God moving upon the Waters of Baptism, makes them salutary, to the purging away the Guilt of Sin, to the renewing our Natures, and thereby giving a spiritual Life of Grace to us. Now whosoever is thus born of God (saith our Text) *overcometh the World*: What is here meant by the World, St. John tells us, 1 John 2. 16. all that is in the World, is *the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; that is, the Pleasures, the Profits, and the Honours of the World, are the Sum Total or Inventory of all its Goods. To overcome the World, is not totally to refuse, or disdainfully to reject these things; for in the right use of them, they are the Blessings of God, and some of the chiefest Comforts of this present Life; but 'tis to destroy that Dominion and inveigling Power it hath over the Minds of Worldlings, that they may not prove Snares to entrap or endanger our Souls, by drawing them from the Love of God, or seeking the better things above: so that the overcoming the World, is the taking off the Heart from all inordinate Love of it, and weakning the Force both of its Terrors and Temptations.

1st, I say, to overcome the World, is to take off the Heart from all inordinate Love and Pursuit of it, that it may not engross too much of our Time, Thoughts, and Affections, that we make not the things of the World the chiefest Objects of our Desire and Delight, nor place too much Trust and Confidence in them; for that is to love the World more than God, and to serve Mammon before our Maker. This is to idolize and worship it, and instead of overcoming the World, to be overcome by it; and of whom a Man is overcome, of him he is brought in Bondage:

dage: so that they who set their Minds and Affections too much upon these things, are truly enough stil'd Slaves to the World, for it hath got the power over them, and puts them upon the vilest and basest Drudgeries. Against this our Apostle cautions, saying, *Love not the World, nor the things of the World; if any Man thus love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him: 1 John 2. 15.* Now to overcome the World, is to keep our Hearts loose from it, to raise them above it, and to place our chiefest Desire and Confidence in God, and the things of Heaven. Again,

2ly, To overcome the World, is to weaken the Force both of its Terrors and Temptations. The World hath Frowns to affright, and Smiles to allure; both which we are to resist and conquer. The frightful part of the World are Persecutions and Troubles, the Losses and Crosses we meet with in this Life; which things are often made use of, to drive Men from their Duty to God, and draw them to the Love of Sin and the World, and too many are overcome and misled by them: but he that is born of God, overcomes these Terrors, and lives above the Frowns and Affrightments of the World; he knows them to be only Trials of his Patience and Constancy, and the Means of amending and making him better, and so instead of driving him from God, bring him the nearer to him.

The tempting part of the World, are the Wealth and Honours, the Power and Pleasures of this Life, which are the Charms that bewitch and allure many to their eternal Ruin: These likewise, he that is born of God, is enabled to overcome by the power of Divine Grace; for he renounces them in his Baptism, and therein receives the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, to subdue and vanquish them.

But what is that Victory, that gives him this Power over the Terrors and Temptations of the World? Why, that the next words tell us, *And this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*; which Faith the Author to the *Hebrews* describes to be *the Substance of Things hop'd for, and the Evidence of Things not seen: Heb. 11. 1.* 'Tis that Grace that makes the future Happiness of the next World present to us in this, whereby we become as firmly persuaded of the Truth of those invisible Glories, as if they were actually before our Eyes: And because these infinitely outshine all the transitory Glories and Advantages of this Life, it makes us despise these, to attain the other. By this Faith it was that the Patriarchs, and many other Worthies,

thies, obtain'd those noble Victories over the World, which are mention'd in that Chapter, who *thro Faith subdu'd Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtain'd the Promises, stopp'd the Mouths of Lions, quench'd the Violence of Fire, escap'd the Edg of the Sword, out of Weakness were made strong, put to flight the Armies of the Aliens*; with many other mighty Atchievements there mention'd at large. And 'tis by this Faith alone, that we can gain this Conquest over the Charms and Inveiglements of the World; which it does partly, by shewing us the Meanness, the Shortness, and the Vanity of all things here below, how suddenly the Glories of the World vanish away, how quickly the Pleasures of it end in loathing, and how soon the Treasures of it are melted down, and come to nothing: And partly likewise by propounding to us the Joys of Heaven, and shewing their transcendent Excellency above all earthly things; how far the immortal Treasures of the next World exceed the fading Riches of this, and how much the lasting unallay'd Pleasures at God's right Hand are to be prefer'd before the present dull, short, and nauseous Delights of Sense. This way the Apostles, and the noble Army of Martyrs, conquer'd all the Frowns and Flatteries of the World by the Eye of Faith, looking thro and beyond those things, to a Crown of Glory reserv'd in Heaven for them.

But what is that Faith that makes us so victorious over the World? Why, that the next words resolve, 'tis the believing that Jesus is the Son of God: *Who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth Jesus to be the Son of God?* that is, he that takes him for the true Messiah, and consequently receives his Doctrine, and obeys his Precepts: For the Faith that doth these great Feats, is not a bare notional or speculative Faith, that swims only in the Brain, or from thence glides down upon the Tongue; but a warm, active, and lively Faith, that affects the Heart, and excites the whole Man to Action. A dull languid Faith can never do the Work of our Salvation, it hath not Strength and Courage enough to give battle to any one single Lust, and much less can it resist or vanquish the Force of stronger Temptations. It must be a Faith inflam'd with the Love of God, that can alone prevail over the Love of the World; its Charms are potent and forcible, and draw strongly, and it must be a very lively, vigorous, and operative Faith to master and overcome them: a dead, lazy, and sluggish Faith is no more able to obtain this difficult Victory,

Victory, than a dead Man can perform the Functions of Life.

Again, the Faith that overcomes the World, must be steadfast and well-grounded, that it may hold out to the end: for the World is daily presenting us with new Objects, and we are frequently assaulted with divers and strong Temptations; and therefore our Faith had need be well bottom'd, to stand firm and to bear the shock of such various and violent Assaults. Hence the Apostle, in 1 Cor. 15. having at large demonstrated the Truth of the Resurrection, both Christ's and ours, he exhorts Christians, in the close of the Chapter, to be *steadfast and unmovable in this Faith, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, that flows from and follows upon it, assuring them, that *their Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; for they shall have Strength enough to assist them, and Reward enough to encourage them. *My Grace is sufficient for you* (saith Christ) and therefore fear not, for *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the World*. This St. Paul found by Experience; for he tells us, that he *could do all things thro Christ which strengthen'd him*. There was nothing too difficult for him to do, nor too hard for him to suffer; and having finish'd his Course, and kept the Faith, by which he overcame the World, there was laid up for him, in the other, a Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judg will give him at the last Day.

Now the Apostle having taught us, that the Means of obtaining Victory over the World, is by believing Jesus to be the Son of God, he proceeds to point him out to us, by the Manner and Circumstances of his Coming, in the next Verse, *This is he that came by Water and Blood, even Jesus Christ, not by Water only, but by Water and Blood*; meaning, that he came in our human Nature, and tho he was the Son of God, yet he became also the Son of Man, and took a Body like ours, which being pierc'd with the Soldier's Spear at his Crucifixion, there came forth of it Water and Blood; John 19. 34. which shew'd both the Reality of his Body, and the Certainty of his Death. Beside, Water, we know, is the Emblem of Purity, because it cleanseth all other things; and Blood is the Emblem of Patience, because the shedding of it causeth Death. And here the former represents the Innocence and Purity of Christ's Life, and the latter the Patience and Severity of his Death; of which excellent Graces he himself hath given us the highest

Example, which we are therefore to imitate, the better to gain this Victory over the World, living in it with Purity and Innocence, and leaving it with Patience and a good Conscience: both which are here represented and recommended to us by the Water and Blood that issu'd out of his Side, *not by Water only, or by either alone, but by Water and Blood*, both together flowing from our Saviour's Body.

But the Fathers have observ'd here another and higher Myſtery, in Chriſt's Coming by Water and Blood; namely, that by a ſpecial Act of God's Providence, there flow'd at that time, out of Chriſt's Side, the two Sacraments, the Water representing Baptiſm, and the Blood the Lord's Supper; the one to cleanſe us from the Guilt of Sin, and the other to continue and confirm our Graces. To aſſure us hereof, the Apoſtle adds, *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is Truth*; meaning, that we have the Teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt for theſe things, who witneſſes them to us, not only outwardly by the Word, but inwardly in the Heart of true Believers: and this Teſtimony may be fitly believ'd and rely'd upon, being the Teſtimony of the Spirit of God, whoſe Title it is to be the Spirit of Truth.

But to put this great Truth of Chriſt's Meſſiahſhip, the Belief whereof is that Faith that overcometh the World, out of all doubt, the Apoſtle brings in the Teſtimony of the whole Trinity to confirm it, in the next words, ſaying, *There are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe three are one.* God the Father teſtify'd of him, by a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleas'd*, Mat. 3. 17. & 17. 5. God the Son teſtify'd it by the Doctrines he deliver'd, and the Miracles that confirm'd it: God the Holy Ghoſt teſtify'd it, by deſcending on him in the Likeneſs of a Dove, and lighting upon him: And theſe three being one in Nature and Eſſence, infinite in Knowledg, Holineſs, and Truth, their concurring Teſtimony muſt be infallibly true and certain. But beſides theſe Witneſſes in Heaven, *there are three that bear witness in Earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood; and theſe three agree in one.* The Spirit, or Holy Ghoſt, bore witneſs of him, by coming down upon him here on Earth, and after by deſcending on his Apoſtles, who thereby ſaw and teſtify'd that the Father had ſent the Son to be the Sa-
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viour of the World; 1 *John* 14. 4. The Water and the Blood testify'd of him, by coming out of his Side, and thereby shewing the Reality of his human Nature, and the Sufferings he underwent in it; and so became the Emblems of the two Sacraments appointed to preserve his Memory. And these three agreeing in attesting the same thing, we may safely rely upon them as sure and uncontestable Witnesses. From thence *St. John* proceeds to argue,

That if we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater. If in all our worldly Affairs we allow the Testimony of two or three credible Witnesses, and generally believe what is so attested; how much more worthy of Belief is the infallible Testimony of God himself, especially when all the three Persons of the Holy Trinity concur in the asserting and attesting of it? *And this is the Witness of God, which he hath testify'd of his Son*; that is, such is the Evidence here given of Christ's being the Son of God, which is built upon the Veracity of God himself, and the Testimony of the whole Trinity.

But we need not look so far abroad for Evidence in this matter; for *he that believeth on the Son of God* (saith our Apostle) *hath the Witness in himself*: that is, his own Conscience will abundantly clear up this matter to him, and the Comfort he feels in believing of it will persuade him more of the Truth of it, than a thousand Witnesses; for the Holy Spirit will imprint it on his Heart, and fill him with that Joy and Peace in believing, which will not suffer him to make the least doubt or scruple about it. Yea, to question this matter, after so full Evidence as God hath given of it, is to impute Falshood to him who is Truth it self; for *he that believeth not God* (say the next words) *hath made him a Lyar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son.* And what is the Record that these divine Witnesses give of him? Why, *This is the Record* (saith *St. John*) *that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.* Eternal Life is the greatest Blessing that Heaven can give, or we receive; and this Blessing God the Father hath contriv'd and confer'd upon us: for which reason, *St. Paul* styles *eternal Life the Gift of God*, *Rom. 6. 23.* But yet *this Life* (saith our Apostle) *is in the Son*; that is, 'tis in him as the Cause, the Head, and Foundation of it; 'tis he that by the Merits of his Death hath purchas'd eternal Life, and by a Deed of Gift hath seal'd and consign'd it to us. We that by our Sins have brought

Death and Misery upon our selves, are unable to preserve a Natural Life, and much more to procure a Spiritual and Eternal Life for us; this is wholly in Christ, who is therefore said to be *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*: he is the Way, to shew us how to walk; the Truth, to direct us what to believe; and the Life, to bring us to eternal Salvation. This he hath purchas'd by the Price of his Sufferings, and so may bestow it how and on whom he pleases: the way of entring into this Life, is by keeping in the Path of his Commandments; by believing his Word, and following his Example, we get an Interest in his Merits and Favour. And then,

He that thus hath the Son, hath Life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not Life. He that hath a true lively Faith in Christ, is by promise intitled to Eternal Life, and then is as sure of attaining to it, as if he were already possess'd of it; but he that hath no share in the Promise, is utterly excluded from all hopes of Life, and must be doom'd at last to Eternal Death.

This is the Drift of the Epistle for this Day, which acquaints us with a Victory gain'd over the World; with the Manner how we may share in the Glory and Benefit of it. From whence we may learn,

1st, To labour every one to partake of this Victory in his own Person. A Christian Life is in Scripture often stil'd a Warfare, and we are all here in a militant State. One of the chief Enemies we are said to encounter, is the World, with all the Baits and Temptations thereof, against which we fight under Christ's Banner; who, by the Assistance of his Grace, makes us more than Conquerors. We began this Holy War at our Baptism, when we solemnly renounc'd the World with all its Pomps and Vanities, and promis'd to maintain the Combat to our Lives end. Christ, the Captain of our Salvation, despis'd all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them, when offer'd to him upon unworthy and unwarrantable Terms. And we too, by his Example, should trample upon all the Profits and Preferments of the World, when they cannot be had without Sin: He that can do this, hath elevated his Mind above the Frowns or Flatteries of this World, and so may be truly said to overcome it. This then let us all endeavour to do, and when we have conquer'd this World, we shall enter in Triumph into a better.

2^{dly},

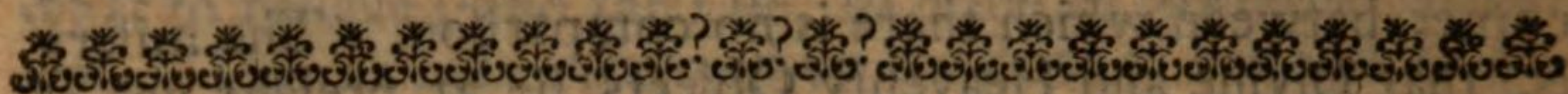
2dly, Since Faith in Christ is not only the Way to this Victory, but even the Victory it self; let us all labour for a true, lively, and active Faith in him, for that will help us to over-look this vain, transitory and perishing World, and to behold the invisible Joys and Glories of the World to come, between which there is no comparison. The misery is, that Divine and Heavenly Objects lie at present out of sight; they are above the ken and reach of our Senses, and therefore do not so powerfully and so constantly affect us, as far meaner things that lie before us, and are daily presented to our view. Now Faith is that Grace that makes future Things present; an intellectual Eye can discern things remote and spiritual, and strike our Minds with a far greater Desire and Delight in them, than in any earthly and sensual Objects. Let us therefore (as the Apostle directs) *live more by Faith and less by Sight*; and that will enable us to say with David, Lord! *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth, that I desire in comparison of thee*; Psal. 73. 25. When we are arriv'd to this, we may be truly said to have overcome the World, and by the strength of our Faith to have gain'd the Victory, through Christ that loved us.

3dly, Since Christ came by Water and Blood, the Emblems of Purity and Patience, and Types of the Holy Sacraments; let us have an esteem for those Elements so consecrated by him, and live in the Use of those Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, which are represented and celebrated by them.

4thly, Since Heaven and Earth bore witness of Christ, that he was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; let us receive their Testimony, and rely upon him as such: to do otherwise, is to make God a Lyar, and to refuse the Atonement he hath contriv'd and provided for us; and *how shall we escape, if we neglect and despise so great Salvation?*

Lastly, Since the Record they bore of him is, that God the Father giveth Eternal Life by his Son; let us all seek to him for it in the Ways of his own Appointment, for there is no Salvation in any other. 'Twas our Saviour's complaint concerning the Jews, that they would not come unto him that they might have Life, but chose rather the way that leadeth to Destruction; for which reason, they are left to groan under their chosen Ruin. Let not this be our Condemnation, that after we have been shew'd the Paths of Life, we walk on still to the Chambers of Death; but

leaving the ways of Sin and Error, let us have recourse to him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and by following of him, we shall arrive at last to the Land of Everlasting Life: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LXIX.

The GOSPEL for the First Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John xx. 19 ——— 24.

The same Day at Evening, being the first Day of the Week, when the Doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his Hands and his Side, &c.

THIS Gospel for the Day continues the great Subject of Christ's Resurrection, and contains the Means us'd for convincing the Disciples of the Reality of it, the Effects it had upon them, and the publick Blessings that were confer'd thereupon. It begins with an Account of a Meeting of the Disciples upon the first News of his being risen, to consult and comfort one another upon the Glad-Tidings; together with the Time, Place, and other Circumstances that attend that great Action: all which are to be the Subject of this Day's Meditations.

The same Day, being the first Day of the Week; that is, the same Day that Christ rose from the Dead: for he lay in the Grave the seventh Day, which was the Jewish Sabbath, and rose again from thence early the next Morning, which was the first Day of the Week. On the Evening of that Day the Disciples were assembled together, to confer about this great matter, and shut the Doors upon them for fear of the Jews; lest their Discourse and Belief of it being nois'd abroad, might occasion trouble, they fasten'd the Doors where they were, and kept themselves as close and secret as possible, to avoid all Danger from the Jews, who could not bear

bear the Report, and much less the spreading of it. However, tho the Doors were thus industriously lock'd and barr'd, to prevent any coming in upon them; yet Jesus, to their great Amazement, *came and stood in the midst of them*: Not that he penetrated or pass'd through the Doors, for that is repugnant to the Nature and Dimensions of a Body, but he miraculously open'd the Doors, and came in among them; as the Angel after open'd the Prison-Gates for Peter to let him out; of which we read, *Acts 12. 10.*

Being come in, *he saith unto them, Peace be unto you*; which was an usual Form of Salutation, enjoin'd by Christ himself, *Luke 10. 5. Into whatsoever House ye enter, say first, Peace be to this House.*

After this Salutation, he proceeds to give them satisfaction concerning the Reality of his Person; for finding them under no small Surprize and Concern about it, he seeks to remove their Fears, by *shewing them his Hands and his Side.* St. Luke relates this Passage more at large, Chap. 24. 37, &c. telling us, that the Disciples were *terrify'd and affrighted* at this unexpected Visit, and *suppos'd that they had seen a Spirit.* But he said unto them, *Why are ye troubled, and why do Thoughts arise in your Hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self; handle me and see me, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have, &c.*

When they were recover'd out of their Fright, and by those palpable Proofs fully satisfy'd that it was his very Person, and his real Human Body which they saw, *then were the Disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* They who were extremely dejected at his Passion, and had all their Hopes buried in the same Grave with him; saying, in that despairing Language, *We thought it had been he that should have redeemed Israel*; but his Death hath cut off all our Hopes, and left us nothing but Sorrow and Disappointment: these very Persons were exceedingly reviv'd at the sight of him being risen again; this gave a new Life to their dying Hopes, and they were transported beyond measure, with Extasies of Joy; they were glad when they saw the Lord, whom they dearly lov'd, for whose sake they parted with all, one who lov'd them to the Death, and purchas'd Eternal Life for them. The word here render'd, *They were glad*, in the Original signifies, not only Joy, but Thanksgiving, and denotes, the Disciples breaking into both upon the sight of their Lord.

Being thus deliver'd of all their Doubts and Fears, and fill'd with great Joy and Rejoicing, he repeats his former Salutation; *saying again to them, Peace be unto you*: which is a wish of all Health and Happiness; Peace being set in Scripture to signify all sorts of Blessings. By this he took his leave of them, and being shortly to leave the World and go to his Father, he gave them the same Commission that he receiv'd from the Father, and had executed in his own Person, in these words; *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*: that is, having settled and establish'd a Church among you, I commit the same Care of it to you in my Absence, that the Father committed to me, when present with you.

And what was that? Why, it consisted chiefly in two or three things.

1st, As my Father sent me to teach and instruct the Church, and to shew to all the Members of it, the way to Salvation; so send I you upon the same Errand, to propagate the Gospel, and to teach the People the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. This Branch of their Commission St. *Matthew* expresses in these Terms; *Go ye and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*; Matth. 28. 19, 20. While Christ was upon Earth, he instructed his Followers himself, as appears by his Divine Sermon on the Mount, and the many Parables and Precepts deliver'd by him, all which he confirm'd with unquestionable Miracles; which shew'd him to be a Teacher come from God, and that what he spake were the words of Eternal Life. At his departure, he committed to the Apostles this word of Reconciliation, willing them, as his Ambassadors, to preach and publish to the World the Glad-tidings of Salvation procur'd by him, and beseeching them in his stead to be reconciled unto God, that they may be partakers of it. This was the End and Business for which God the Father sent his Son, the doing whereof he often stiles, *the doing the Work, and seeking the Honour of him that sent him*. And this is the Errand upon which God the Son sent his Apostles, and likewise all that orderly succeed them in the Work of the Ministry; who are still requir'd to feed the Flock of Christ with sound Doctrine, and to go before them with a holy and pious Example, that they may save themselves, and them that hear them.

2^{dly}, As

2dly, As my Father sent me to rule and govern the Church, so send I you with the same Authority to execute that Office in my stead. Our Saviour after his Resurrection declar'd, that *all Power was given unto him in Heaven and in Earth*, Mat. 28. 18. By which he was made Lord and King over the Church, with full Authority to dispose and order all things in it. By virtue hereof, as he govern'd the Church himself whilst he remain'd upon Earth, so before his Ascension he deputed and delegated the same Power to his Apostles when he was gone; giving them Authority over the other Disciples, to preside and order all things in the Church by the Rules which he had left them. For as no Society can subsist without Government, whereby some are appointed to rule, and others to be ruled by them; so neither can the Church, which is a form'd standing Society, continue without a Subordination of Officers, to teach and rule the other Members. For'tis not to be imagin'd, that Christ in settling his Church should leave it destitute of such a Power, as was necessary to its Subsistence and Order, and without which it must unavoidably run to Ruin and Confusion. Hence we read, that *God hath set some in his Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, and thirdly Teachers*; 1 Cor. 12. 28. And in the Epistle to the Ephesians 'tis said, *He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ*; Eph. 4. 11, 12. Where Apostles are still reckon'd in the first place, as referring not so much to the Priority of Time, as of Order and Dignity; they being the Governours and Superintendants over the rest. And this Order is still continu'd in the Church by a constant Succession of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; and may it do so to the end of the World.

Again, 3dly, As my Father hath sent me to appoint Teachers and Rulers in the Church, to supply the want of my Presence; so I send you to ordain others in it, to supply the Defect of your Mortality. This Commission was granted to the Apostles, the highest Order in the Church, to preserve an orderly Succession of lawful Pastors and Teachers in it to the World's end. And this Power hath been deriv'd down to the Bishops their Successors herein ever since, whose sole Office it is to admit Persons into this Sacred Function, and to provide Pastors for all the Flock of Christ, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers;

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Ἐπισκόπους, Bishops, for so the Word signifies in the Original, and should have been so translated. These are *to feed the Church of God* with sound Doctrine and a holy Discipline, *under the great Bishop and Shepherd of our Souls, who laid down his Life for the Sheep*; Acts 20. 28. Hence we read of the Holy Ghost's saying to the Apostles, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the Work whereunto I have call'd them. And when they had fasted and pray'd, they laid their Hands on them, and sent them away*: Acts 13. 2, 3. St. Paul constituted his Disciple and Convert *Timothy* Bishop of *Ephesus*, and wrote two Epistles to him, to furnish him for the faithful Discharge of his Office; having under him all the Churches of the Proconsular *Asia*. After which, *he left Titus in Crete, to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain Elders in every City*: which the Presbyters that were there before had no Authority to do. And this hath been so much the peculiar Province of Bishops, from the days of the Apostles to this present time, that for the space of fifteen hundred Years together, no one National Church ever accounted any Ordination to be valid, but what was confer'd by the Hands of Bishops: tho some upstart Sects have risen of late, who take upon them to thrust out Teachers in the World without Episcopal Orders, to the great disturbance of the Church, and the peril of many Souls. Whose Preachings therefore have been justly reckon'd no other than the Pratings of Seducers and false Teachers, their Baptisms no better than common Washings, and their Ordinations of no more force than the sending any upon an ordinary Errand.

Lastly, As my Father sent me with a Promise of Assistance and Success in the Work he gave me to do, even so send I you with the same Promise of Assistance and Encouragement in the Work whereunto I have call'd you. God the Father promis'd and foretold by the Prophet *Isaiah* concerning the *Messias*, that he *should see of the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfy'd*; that by his Knowledge *should his righteous Servant justify many, and that the Work of the Lord should prosper in his Hand*; Isa. 53. 10, 11. All which he abundantly fulfill'd and made good to his Son, by the Increase of his Kingdom, by enlarging his Church, and daily adding thereunto such as should be sav'd. The like Promise did Christ make, in sending forth his Apostles and Disciples, that *he would be with them always, to the end of the World*; Mat. 28. 20. that is, he would be with them, to direct
and

and assist them in all their Difficulties, to comfort and support them under all their Distresses, and to prosper and succeed them in all their Undertakings: which things were all perform'd to them, by giving them a Mouth and Wisdom which all their Adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist; by enabling them to propagate the Gospel, which he himself had planted, and to their great joy proselyting all Nations to the Belief of it, notwithstanding all the Opposition made against it.

The same Promise is continu'd still to their Successors in the Work of the Ministry, to whom he hath said, that he will never leave nor forsake them, but will be always with them to the end of the World. And this Promise is made good to them by the Presence and Assistance of his Holy Spirit. And this will lead to

The Manner or Form used in Christ's sending and assisting his Apostles and Ministers: and that is contain'd in the next words; *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* Where his breathing on them was a Token or Emblem of Inspiration, and signifies his infusing a new Life and Vigour into them: for Breath is *Vehiculum Vitæ*, the Vehicle or Instrument of Life, it both gives and preserves it; whilst we have it, we are living Souls, but when 'tis gone, but dead Carcases: And as God breath'd into *Adam* the Breath of Life, whereby he receiv'd a natural Life, and became a living Creature; so Christ breathes into us his Holy Spirit, whereby we receive a spiritual Life, and so become new Creatures. Christ's breathing then on the Apostles, was an outward Sign of this inward Inspiration. The Form of Words he used therein, was, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*: which doth not signify here the actual giving or receiving of the Holy Ghost, for that did not come to pass till the Day of Pentecost, which was a little after; but his bidding them to be ready to receive the Holy Ghost, and his breathing on them, was a fitting or preparing them to receive it: for which he will'd them to stay a while at *Jerusalem*, and he would send the Promise of his Father upon them, and endow them with Power from on high; meaning, his visible Mission of the Holy Ghost, which actually came down upon them soon after, as we read, *Acts* 2. 1, 2. And this was a farther Confirmation of what he before told them, that *as my Father sent me, so send I you*: signifying, that as Christ was anointed and consecrated to his Office

Office by the Holy Ghost's descending upon him in the shape of a Dove at his Baptism, *Acts* 10. 38. & *Mat.* 3. 16, 17. so the Apostles were consecrated by the same Holy Spirit's coming down upon them in the shape of fiery cloven Tongues, at their Entrance upon the Ministry; *Acts* 2. 1. Hence those words, *Receive the Holy Ghost*, are still used in conferring of Holy Orders, by the laying on the Hands of the Bishop, to intimate the pouring out of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, to enable Persons ordain'd to a faithful Discharge of their Office.

But what Benefit or Favour accrues to the Church by this their receiving the Holy Ghost? Why, that the following words declare to be the Remission of Sins, or absolving Penitents from the Guilt of them, in the Name, and for the Merits of Jesus Christ: this is held forth in those words; *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd.* This is generally stiled the Power of the Keys, whereby the authoriz'd Ministers of Christ have a power of admitting into, and excluding out of the Church, and thereby of opening and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven; the one by Absolution, the other by Excommunication. 'Tis call'd in *St. Matthew* the power of binding and loosing, *Mat.* 16. 19. *Whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* Sinners are said to be ty'd and bound with the Chain of their Sins, to be holden with Cords, and reserv'd in Chains of Darkness to the Judgment of the last Day. Now 'tis Christ alone, by his pardoning Grace, that can loose those Cords, take off those Chains, and free them from all Obligation to future Punishments. The power of doing this he communicated to his Apostles, not to *St. Peter* only, as some fondly imagine, who make him the sole Key-keeper of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to all the rest also, and likewise to all that succeed them in their Office to the World's end. Hence our Church hath three Forms of Absolution set down in her publick Liturgy. The first is Declarative, in the daily Absolution that follows the Confession; where the Priest is impower'd to pronounce and declare to the People, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins. The second is Optative, in the Form used in the Communion-Service; where the Priest prays to God, who hath promis'd Forgiveness of Sins to all that by Faith and Repentance turn to him, to have mercy
upon

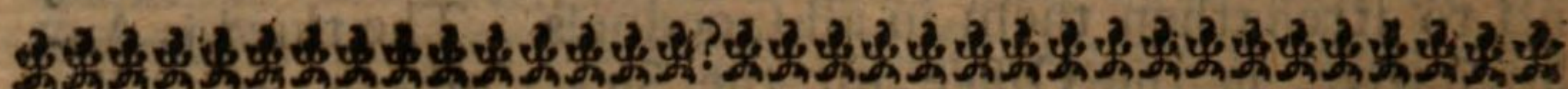
upon them, to pardon and deliver them from all their Sins, and to strengthen them in all Goodness. The third is Authoritative, in the Office for the Sick; where, upon the hearty Confession and Desire of the sick Person, the Priest is impower'd to say, *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left Power in his Church to absolve all Sinners that truly repent and believe in him, forgive thee thy Offences; and by his Authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy Sins.* This Power was given for the Ease of dying and despairing Persons, which must be used with great Tenderness and Discretion; and the rather, because the Sentence duly pronounc'd here, will be ratify'd in Heaven, and determine their future and final State.

This is the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, which may teach us,

1. The Honour and Dignity of the regular Clergy, who are intrusted with so great a Power, being the Ambassadors of Christ, the Ministers and Stewards of holy Mysteries, and Fellow-workers with God; an Employment fit for Angels, and above the rate of common Mortals, to dispose of God's Mercy, and seal Pardons to humble Penitents: for which the Apostle would have them held in high estimation, and to be counted worthy of double Honour.

2. We learn hence the Duty as well as Dignity of Christ's Ministers; which is, to be diligent and faithful in their Office: *It is requir'd in Stewards (saith the Apostle) that they be found faithful.* And this is more especially requir'd of the Stewards in God's Household, faithfully to discharge so high a Trust, to dispense to all according to their need, and to give every one their Meat in due season, to restore them that fall, and comfort the Feeble-minded.

3. We may infer hence the People's Duty towards Christ's Ministers; which is, to receive their Instructions, and submit to their Authority. They that will not *hearken to the Church*, are by our Saviour's Orders to be put out of it, and to be counted *but as Heathen Men and Publicans*, Mat. 18. 17, 18. Christ counts the Honour and Observance paid to his Ministers as done to himself, and the Neglect of them as a Contempt of him: for *he that beareth you (saith he) beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* In a word, beware of offending either of these, which draw on the just Indignation of the rest.



DISCOURSE LXX.

The EPISTLE for the Second Sunday after
Easter.

1 Pet. ii. 19, to the end.

This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience towards God endure Grief, suffering wrongfully: for what Glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your Faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God, &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us of a double End of God the Father's giving us his Son; the one to be a *Sacrifice for Sin*, which he was by his Death; the other to be an *Ensam ple of godly Life*, which he was by his Resurrection: and from both teaches us to pray for Grace, thankfully to receive the Benefit of his Death, and daily endeavour to follow the blessed Steps of his most holy Life. And because his Patience under Sufferings was so remarkable, and worthy of Imitation,

The Epistle for the Day sets before us that admirable Pattern; directing Christians how to demean themselves under all the Evils that may befall them in this Life.

That Sufferings are the Lot of good Men as well as bad, is a Truth so obvious in Experience, as to need no farther proof. *Job, David, and Daniel* in the Old Testament; our Saviour, his Apostles, and the primitive Christians in the New, are plain Instances of this sad Truth. Jesus Christ himself, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, endur'd the Cross, and bid his Disciples ever since to be ready to take it up, and follow him. He drank of the bitter Cup of God's Wrath, which doth not wholly pass from us, but we still sip of that Cup which he took off to the very dregs. Sufferings then are the Portion of the best, as well as the worst Men; which may put us upon Inquiry,

First,

First, Into the different Nature and Kinds of Sufferings.
Secondly, Into the different Causes and Reasons of them.
Thirdly, Into the different Carriage and Behaviour of Men under them. And,
Fourthly, Into the different End and Reward of them.

For the different Nature and Kinds of Sufferings, they relate either to the Body, or Soul, or Estate, or good Name; in all which, both good and bad Men are liable to suffer.

For the Body, that is liable to Sickneses and Diseases, to capital and sanguinary Punishments, to Maiming and Mutilation of Parts, and to branding of them with Marks of Infamy.

For the Soul, that is liable to Grief and Sorrow, to Desertion and Despair, to the Loss of the Divine Favour, and to the Remorse and Anguish of an evil Conscience; which are some of the worst kind of Sufferings.

For our Estate, that is liable to Losses and Crosses, and Disappointments, to Rapine and Oppression, and many other ways of lessening or impairing our Substance.

For our Name, that is liable to Slander, Detraction, Whispering and Defamation, and the like. To these different sorts of Sufferings, all, even the best of Men, are in some measure obnoxious. But to come nearer to the Epistle for the Day, I proceed,

Secondly, To consider the different Causes of these Sufferings. And here some suffer without a cause, being innocent of the Crime laid to their charge; and this is great Cruelty and Injustice. Others, by aggravating the Fault above the just Proportion and Measure of its Guilt, suffer more and beyond the Merits of the Cause; and this is unmerciful and unrighteous dealing. Others again suffer for a good Cause, as for the Name of Christ, or for Righteousness sake; and this is properly Persecution: and if the Suffering amount to Death, or resisting unto Blood, 'tis what is truly call'd Martyrdom.

Now this is what *St. Peter* here saith is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience toward God endure Grief, suffering wrongfully. If by adhering to our Duty to God, and keeping a good Conscience toward him, we are at any time drawn into Sufferings, we need not be asham'd or discourag'd; for

for this is highly pleasing and acceptable unto God, who esteems it an Act of Love and Obedience done to him, and will be sure to remember and reward it: for so *thank-worthy* here imports, that so to suffer is not only worth Thanks, but worthy of a Reward. *If you love them that love you* (saith our Saviour) *what Thanks have you?* Luke 6. 32. that is, this merits no Return or Regard. But if you love them that hate you, and return Good for the Evil done to you; this is fit to be consider'd and made up to you, and you shall be recompens'd at the Resurrection of the Just.

But as some suffer without a Cause, and others in a good Cause, so there are others that suffer in and for a bad Cause: And this is so far from being thank-worthy, that 'tis worthy of all blame; *For what glory is it* (saith our Apostle) *if when you are buffeted for your Faults, you take it patiently?* If any fall under the just Punishments of his Vices and evil Deeds, he receives only the Wages due to his Sin, and feels no more than what is justly inflicted on him; such Sufferings are not to be glory'd in, but to be asham'd of, for they serve only to betray and expose his Guilt: and if any glory in them, he doth but glory in his Shame, which will end at last in Confusion of Face. This our Apostle expresses elsewhere, by *suffering as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil-doer, or as a Busy-body in other Mens matters*; 1 Pet. 4. 15. cautioning all Christians against such Sufferings, as tending only to Shame and pitiless Misery. For what Honour is due to the Thief or the Traytor, who are hang'd for their Crimes? or who pities the Evil-doer or the Busy-body, for being buffeted for their Faults? Such Sufferings can yield no Comfort here, and will turn to a worse account hereafter: for they are but the Beginning of Sorrows, and the Fore-runner of future and far greater Punishments. *But if* (as the Apostle resumes the Argument) *when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God*: yea, so acceptable, as to intitle us to the Crown of Martyrdom. And our present Sufferings of this kind, how heavy soever they may be, will add to and increase our future and eternal Weight of Glory. This is, in that forecited place, express'd by *suffering as a Christian*; that is, for Christ's sake, for his Cause, and by his Command. And such a one is there exhorted *not to be asham'd* of such Sufferings, but rather to look upon them as his Honour and Glory, to esteem them as an Excellence, a Privilege, and a special Gift of God: *To you it is given to suffer*
for

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for the Name of Christ, for the Spirit of Glory and of God
resteth upon you; Phil. 1. 29. 1 Pet. 4. 14.

Thus we see that even the best of Men are in this Life
exercis'd with many Trials and Afflictions.

But, *Thirdly*, What is the Duty or Vertue to be exercis'd
under them? Why that, we see, is Patience, Submission
to God's Will, and Perseverance unto the end. *For even*
hereunto were ye called (saith the Apostle in the next words)
because Christ also suffer'd for us: meaning, that our Calling
as Christians leads to Patience, and the End of our Christia-
nity is to be made conformable to Christ, as well in his
Sufferings, as in his Glory; *Rom. 8. 29.* Now we are call'd
to Patience, both by Christ's Precept, and by his Example.
His Precept is, *in Patience to possess our Souls*, and to *run*
with Patience the Race that is set before us: And that not
only in the smooth and easy Paths of Prosperity, but in the
rougher and harder Paths of Adversity and Trouble. And
in these we have need of Patience, *that having done the Will*
of God, we may receive the Promise; *Heb. 10. 36.* St. James
directs to *let Patience have its perfect Work*, *Chap. 1. 4.* that
we may not faint, but rejoice in Tribulations. And St. Pe-
ter bids us, to all other Graces and Vertues to add *Patience*,
which alone can carry us through the Difficulties of the
World, and at last crown all. To which we are encou-
rag'd by the *Example of Job*; and are likewise bid to *take*
the Prophets, who spake in the Name of the Lord, for Patterns
of suffering Affliction, and of Patience; *James 5. 10, 11.*

But we have here a higher Example of Patience than all
these, *viz.* that of our Blessed Saviour, who call'd us here-
unto by his Example as well as Precept; for *he suffer'd for*
us, leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps.
He endur'd the Rage and Cruelty of the bitterest Enemies,
the Tortures of the Cross, and the Shame and Ignominy of
the World, with an invincible Patience; taking off the
bitter Cup with that humble Resignation, *Father, not my*
Will, but thine be done. Thus he hath taught us to pray,
and by his own Example to practise.

And lest any should plead Innocence for an Exemption,
or think Goodness to be privileg'd from Sufferings; the A-
postle adds the greatest Instance of Innocence and Good-
ness that the World ever had, affirming of our Saviour,
that *he did no Sin, nor was any Guile found in his mouth.*
And yet no Sufferings were thought too great for his Ene-

mies to inflict, or for him to endure : He who had no Guile found in his Mouth, found the Mouths of the Deceitful open'd upon him; and he who did no Sin, suffer'd the worst and sorest Punishments of Sinners. And that too without offering the least Provocation, or entertaining the least Thought of Revenge : for

When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffer'd, he threatned not. When he was reproach'd for all the Miracles and Acts of Kindness he had done, he made no Return; but as the Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, so he open'd not his Mouth. When his Enemies spit their Venom in his face, and pour'd out the Poison of Asps that was under their Tongues, he seal'd up his Lips, and gave not an ill word to all their Calumnies; when he was crucify'd and barbarously used by them, he return'd nothing but Prayers for them, and interceded for their Pardon, even when they were doing the Injury. And what an unparallel'd Pattern of Patience hath he hereby given us? *He threatned not* (saith the Apostle) *but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Where two or three things may be observ'd: He did not take God's Work out of his hand, by revenging himself; nor did he seek Reparation from the partial and corrupt Judgment of earthly Powers, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and remitted his Cause to God's Tribunal.

1. I say, he would not take God's Work out of his hands by avenging himself; for 'tis written, *Vengeance is mine* (saith God) *and I will repay*: He hath reserv'd that to himself, and will not have it invaded by any of his Creatures, without his Order and Commission. Accordingly, tho Christ, as God, might have executed Vengeance on all his Enemies, yet acting here in our human Nature as our Surety, he would not meddle with what belong'd only to the divine Nature. By whose Example, as well as Precept, we are taught not to revenge any Injury done to us, by our own Hands: *Dearly Beloved, avenge not your selves* (saith St. Paul) *but rather give place unto Wrath; and render to no man Evil for Evil, but ever follow that which is good, both among your selves, and to all Men: Rom. 12. 19. 1 Theff. 5. 15.* And as Christ would not revenge himself, so neither would he seek it from earthly Powers: not that this is always unlawful, for God hath appointed Magistrates, in many cases, to be *Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil, Rom. 13. 4.* but to give us the highest Example of

of Meekness, Peaceableness, and Patience. *I gave my Cheek to the Smiter (saith he) and hid not my Face from Spitting and Shame; Isa. 50.6. and hath willed us, if any smite on the right Cheek, to turn to him the other also; and if any sue thee at the Law for thy Coat, let him have thy Cloke also: Mat. 5. 39, 40. meaning, that we should imitate him, in taking rather than in doing any wrong. This he did, to set before us a Pattern of Patience, to follow in the Course of our Lives; Committing our selves, as he did, to him that judgeth righteously: that is, leaving matters in many cases to the great Judg of all the Earth, who will in his due time do all Men right.*

Moreover, To inculcate this hard Lesson upon us, the Apostle minds us, of what heavy things Christ hath bore for our sake, in the next Verse, *Who his own self bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree:* meaning, that Christ bore the Punishment of our Iniquities in his own Person on the Cross, to the intent that we *should die unto Sin*, as he died for it; and *live unto Righteousness*, by the Power of his Resurrection: especially considering, that the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and *by his Stripes we are healed.*

To all which, he adds a weighty Reason in the close, taken from what we were by Nature, and what we are now restor'd to by Grace: *For ye were as Sheep going astray, but are now return'd to the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.* Where we are taught,

1st, That by the first Transgression we all erred and strayed out of the way like lost Sheep.

2dly, That 'tis our Duty and Safety to return. And,

3dly, That our Return must be to the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls. Of each of which a word.

1st, I say, we are here taught, that by the first Transgression we have all erred and stray'd like lost Sheep. This we daily acknowledg in our Prayers, and have all great reason so to do; for we have all wander'd out of the ways of God's Commandments, and broken his Laws in Thought, Word, and Deed. We have erred by less, and stray'd by greater Sins; and by both losing the way that leads to Life, we are become like lost Sheep. Faults of Ignorance and Inadvertence are commonly call'd Errors, which having less of Guilt, usually find more Mercy, and an easier Pardon than others: Sins of Wilfulness and Presumption are call'd greater Strayings, which having more of the Will, are more provoking and more hardly forgiven; but both

are Aberrations from God's Ways, and the Paths of Life, and are no better than Wandrings in the Ways of Death and Destruction. And therefore both are to be confess'd, lamented and amended: which leads to the

2d Thing here taught such Strayers, and that is to *return*; for what should they do, who are out of the way, but return? for the longer they continue and go on in a wrong Way, the more they are bewilder'd, and the more dangerous and difficult will be their Return. Now as we go astray by our Sins, so must our Return be by Repentance; and according to the Measure and Guilt of our Sins, so are the Degrees of our Repentance to be. Sins of Willfulness and Presumption will require greater Pangs of Sorrow, than Sins of Weakness and Infirmary; as we see in *David* in the Old Testament, and *Peter* in the New: the Murder and Adultery of one, and the Denial of Christ in the other, cost them the bitterest Tears of Grief and Repentance to wash them away. Return then we all must; but to whom? Why, that we are told,

3dly, *Is to the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls*: for where should straying Sheep go, but to a Shepherd; and lost Sheep, but to him that *came to seek and to save them that were lost*? The Prodigal Son, after all his wandring and riotous living, when he *came to himself*, return'd to his Father, and said, *Father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son*; Luke 15. 21.

And as we are to return to the *Shepherd*, so likewise to the *Bishop of our Souls*. The Soul goes astray, as well as the Body; yea, the one often misleads the other, and both are too apt to go out of the way that they should go, and to wander in the By-paths of Sin and Error: If then we have forsaken the Doctrine or Discipline of the Christian Church by Errors and Divisions, or if we have left the Fellowship and Communion of the Church by Schism and Separation; we are to return to Christ the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, by returning to the inferiour Bishops and Pastors of his Church, appointed by him.

Thus I have briefly consider'd the material Passages of this Epistle, which will afford us sundry good Lessons.

As, 1. Since Sufferings are the Lot and Portion even of good Men in this Life, let us learn to expect and prepare for them. The Sting and Bitterness of any Affliction is

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a Surprize, when it comes upon us unawares, for then it seizes us unarm'd and unprovided to receive it; but when we count upon and look for it before-hand, we all have the Succours of Reason and Religion ready against it comes, and that will very much allay the Difficulty, and take off the Force of it. And therefore we should, like Mariners, prepare for a Storm in the midst of a Calm, and think of Adversity in our greatest Prosperity.

2. We are here taught the Lesson of Patience, which is the Vertue to be exercis'd under all the Sufferings that befall us: *In Patience possess your Souls* (saith our Saviour) *Luke 21. 19.* as if a Man out of patience were out of the possession of his Soul; and indeed an impatient Person is in some measure beside himself, he loses the Use of his Reason, and turns Religion out of doors. And therefore we have need of Patience to bear up like Men under the many Evils of this Life; to which end, let us consider whence they come: Afflictions spring not out of the Dust, but come from the Hand of a gracious God, who designs nothing but our Good in all his Corrections. Beside, Patience will lighten the Burden, and sooner remove it, than a peevish impatient Spirit, which adds to the Weight, and makes it more heavy and lasting. In short, Afflictions borne with Patience will have an happy End and Issue, for they *work out for us an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*: which made St. Paul reckon the *Sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory that shall be reveal'd in us*; Rom. 8. 18.

But, 3. The principal Lesson that we are to learn from hence, is to have regard to the Cause of our Sufferings; that they be only for a good Cause, and not the just Demerit of our Faults. To suffer for Christ, or for *Righteousness sake*, is a Matter of great Joy, and will be attended with an ample Reward; for *blessed are they that are persecuted for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when Men shall revile and persecute you, for great is your Reward in Heaven*; Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. St. Peter advises all Christians to take heed, that they *suffer not as Murderers, or Thieves or Evil-doers, or as Busy-bodies in other Mens Matters*; yet if any Man suffer as a Christian, let him not be asham'd: 1 Pet. 4. 15. intimating, that 'tis no matter of Glory, but of Shame, to suffer for our Vices and Enormities. To suffer for invading another Man's Life or Substance, to be punish'd as an Evil-doer, or to die

the Death of a Malefactor, to be revil'd for a Busy-body, or a pragmatical Medler in other Mens Matters; thus to suffer, I say, can afford no Man any Satisfaction or Reward. In like manner, to suffer for breaking the Union and Communion of the Church, and rending the one Body of Christ by Schisms and Divisions, is to suffer as an Evil-doer, it being a transgressing of all the Precepts of Unity, and the Prohibitions of Divisions; and tho' the Offenders of this kind are apt to cry out and complain of Persecution, yet have they as little reason, as any other Malefactors, who bear the just Punishment of their Crimes.

But if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, (saith our Apostle) happy are ye; and be not afraid of their Terrour, neither be troubled, only sanctify God in your Hearts, and labour to have and to keep a good Conscience, that whereas they speak of you as Evil-doers, they may be asham'd that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ: For it is better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for Well-doing, than for Evil-doing; therein following the Example of our Saviour, who suffer'd for us, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God: 1 Pet. 3. 14, &c.

Lastly, Let the Sense of our returning to Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, and being made conformable to him in all our Sufferings in a good Cause, teach us to lift up our Heads, and rather to rejoice than repine at such Tribulations. Our Saviour himself was made perfect by Sufferings, he receiv'd not the Crown, before he had endur'd the Cross; and truly our way to eternal Life, is gladly to suffer with him. He that is too nice and tender to bear any Hardship for his Saviour, is not worthy of him, and shall never receive any Benefit by his Sufferings: such a one will soon make shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience, and in time of Temptation will fall away. They that do so, will be disown'd by him in the last Day, and be doom'd for ever to depart from him; whereas by adhering to him in times of Trial and Persecution, we engage him in time of Need to stand by us; and if we suffer with him, we shall be glorify'd together: Which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LXVI.

The G O S P E L for the second Sunday
after Easter.

St. John x. 11 — 17.

Jesus said, I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his Life for the Sheep; but he that is an Hireling, and not the Shepherd, whose own the Sheep are not, seeth the Wolf coming, and leaveth the Sheep and fleeth, and the Wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the Sheep, &c.

IN the Close of the Epistle for this Day, we were minded of returning to the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, from whom we have erred and stray'd like lost Sheep.

In this Gospel for the Day we are told who this Shepherd is, to whom we are to return, together with the Love he shews to, and the great Care he takes of his Sheep. *I am the good Shepherd* (saith Christ) sent by my Father to that Office, in opposition to those false Christs and Impostors, who pretend to the Messiahship without any Call or Commission so to do: for Christ himself foretold that *false Christs and false Prophets should arise, and come with Signs and lying Wonders, insomuch that they would deceive many; yea, if it were possible, the very Elect.* For some would say, Lo! here is Christ; and others, Lo! there: One, that he is in the Field; another, that he is in the secret Chambers; a third, in the Conventicle: Of all which his Advice is, *Believe them not, and go not after them.* These, in the foregoing part of the Chapter, he stiles, *Thieves and Robbers, that enter not by the Door into the Sheepfold:* meaning, that they come not with the Purity of Doctrine, or the Power of Miracles, to seal and confirm their Mission; but climb up some other Way, namely, by the Steps of Avarice, Ambition, and worldly Interest, designing not so much to feed, as to fleece and devour the Flock. Now, in

opposition to these, Christ styles himself, *ver. 7. The Door of the Sheep*, by which if any Man enter he comes safely into the Fold. And here he declares of himself, *I am the good Shepherd*; that is, the true Messias, that is come to seek and to save them that were lost. This Title of Shepherd refers to the Customs of those times, when these Words were spoken; for then the greatest part of Mens Wealth and Substance consisted in Sheep, and the greatest Persons thought it not beneath them to watch and take care of their Flocks. *Jacob* and *David* are remark'd in Scripture for their Care and Diligence in keeping their Sheep. Hence Kings are often stil'd, the Shepherds of the People. The *Israelites*, who were God's peculiar People and Treasure, were call'd the Sheep of his Pasture. Hence the antient Prophets describ'd the Messias by the Character of a Shepherd, to which our Saviour here alludes, in saying, *I am the good Shepherd*.

But how did Christ discharge the Office, and make good the Character of a Shepherd? Why, the Duty and Office, we know, of a good Shepherd, is to take all due Care of the Sheep committed to his Charge. And that consists chiefly in three things:

First, In feeding them.

Secondly, In defending them. And,

Thirdly, In saving them from being lost. All which things we shall find fully discharg'd by our Blessed Saviour towards Mankind, and therefore he justly deserves the Character of *the good Shepherd*.

First, I say, one main Duty and Office of a good Shepherd, is to feed the Flock, to put them into good Pasture, where they may have Grass to satisfy their Hunger, and Water to quench their Thirst; which every one knows is the Care of a good Shepherd. And this Care Christ hath abundantly taken for the feeding of his Flock, in providing all things necessary and convenient for them. He feeds their Bodys with daily and competent Food, and hath promis'd, if they seek first the Kingdom of God and the Righteousness thereof, to add all other necessary Supports of Life to them. *The Lord is my Shepherd* (saith the Psalmist) *therefore shall I lack nothing; he shall feed me in a green Pasture, and lead me forth beside the Waters of Comfort*: *Psal. 23.*

But

But Christ being chiefly the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, his principal Care is imploy'd in feeding them. To which end, he hath provided all manner of spiritual and heavenly Food for their Sustainance and Salvation. Because *Man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; therefore he hath taken care to feed them with sound Doctrine, and hath given to them the words of eternal Life: yea, he hath given them his own Body, to be the spiritual Food and Nourishment of their Souls, and spar'd not his own Life, but laid it down for his Sheep; thereby discharging the highest Office of a *good Shepherd, who* (as he tells us) *giveth his Life for the Sheep*: By which he hath given us his own Flesh to eat, and his own Blood to drink, for the Health and Salvation of our Souls. In a word, he hath given corporal Bread to feed the Body, and the Bread of Life to feed the Soul, and by both shew'd himself to be the good Shepherd. Neither did this Pastoral Care die with him, but continu'd after his Resurrection, his Care then being rather increas'd than diminish'd; for the Commission, which was only to the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*, while he was alive, was enlarg'd and extended to the lost Sheep of all the World, when he rose again: *Go* (saith he) *and teach all Nations, and as my Father sent me, so send I you*; Mat. 28. & John 20. He told St. *Peter*, that if he would shew his Love to him, he should do it by feeding his Sheep, and repeated it three times, that he might take the greater Care about it. He likewise gave particular Charge to the rest of the Apostles, and those that succeeded them, to feed their particular Flocks, over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers, promising to be with them always to the end of the World. Thus as he was a Priest, so was he a Shepherd for ever: for after he had in Person ascended up into Heaven, he took care of the Flock which he had left behind him upon Earth; and that they might not be as Sheep without a Shepherd, he sent down the Holy Ghost, who gave Gifts unto Men, making some Apostles, some Prophets, some Pastors and Teachers, for the edifying his Church, and continuing his pastoral Care over it to the World's end: by which he faithfully discharg'd the first Office of a good Shepherd, in feeding his Flock.

The *Second* is to defend them from all harm, to protect them from the Dog, the Fox, and the Wolf, who all lie
in

in wait for the Sheep, the one to bite, the other to betray, and the third to devour them; and 'tis no small part of a Shepherd's Care to secure them against all these: *He that is a Hireling indeed, and not the Shepherd, whose own the Sheep are not, seeth the Wolf coming, and leaveth the Sheep, and fleeth, and the Wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the Sheep.* Where by the Hireling is meant Impostors and false Teachers, who mind the Fleece more than the Flock; such as are not the proper Shepherds of the Sheep, but entice and draw them out of others Flocks, to make a Gain or Market of them. These, when they see any Danger approaching, forsake the Flock, and leave them to be scatter'd and divided to their utter Ruin: *The Hireling* (as he goeth on) *fleeth, because he is an Hireling, and careth not for the Sheep*; that is, he hath little or no Love or Regard to the Flock, but is intent only on his own Interest and Advantage: and tho he may stick to them, while any thing may be gotten by them, yet he soon leaves them when any Danger approaches, or Interest fails. But Christ, who is the right Owner of the Sheep, better discharges the Office of a Shepherd; he is more tender of his Flock: and because the Simplicity of Sheep, and the Innocence of Lambs, expose them to many Dangers, he takes care to guard and defend them against their Enemies: to which end, he warns them to *beware of Dogs*, to whom he compares false Teachers, *Phil. 3. 2.* Again, he cautions them against *Foxes*, to whom he likens false Prophets, *Ezek. 13. 4.* but above all, he warns them against *Wolves*, that come to them in Sheeps-clothing, merely to betray them to their utter Destruction. In a word, the watchful Eye of Divine Providence is so over the Flock of Christ, to guard the Sheep of his Pasture, that nothing shall harm them, if they are Followers of that which is good. And thus to defend and preserve them from Evil, is the second Part and Duty of a good Shepherd.

The *Third* is to keep them from straying, from being stoln, or any other way of being lost; which every good Shepherd will make it his great Care to do. To which end he will be often numbering of them, to see whether any be missing; and if so, he is very diligent in seeking that which is lost, and ceases not till he find it. The Thief cometh not but to scatter, to steal, and to destroy; but the good Shepherd to keep the Flock together, to prevent
their

their wandering, and to preserve Life, and *that they may have it more abundantly.*

Now in this sense too our Saviour hath quitted himself like a good Shepherd; for he *came to seek and to save them that were lost*, Luke 19. 10. which he hath effectually done, by recalling those that went astray, and reducing them to his Fold: for *all we* (saith St. Peter) *like Sheep were gone astray, but are return'd to the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.* And we find Christ himself telling his Father, *that of all those, which he had given him, he had not lost one*; John 18. 9. and thereby he faithfully discharg'd his Office, in feeding, defending, and saving his Flock, and might justly stile himself *the good Shepherd.*

This Character of himself he repeats again in the next Verse, with two other Marks of it, saying, *I am the good Shepherd, and know my Sheep, and am known of mine.*

By knowing his Sheep here, is meant his discerning or distinguishing them from others, which are none of his; for as Shepherds are wont to set some certain Mark on their Sheep, the better to know them by, so Christ sets his Seal upon his Flock, by which (as the Apostle tells us) *the Foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth who are his*; 2 Tim. 2. 19.

Now Christ knows his Sheep, so as to distinguish them from others here, and likewise so as to separate and advance them above others hereafter.

1st. I say, when Christ saith, *He knows his Sheep*, he means that he can distinguish them from the Goats, and others that belong not to him. He knows his own Flock, *i. e.* who are his true and faithful Servants, and can discern them from the unsanctify'd Herd of reprobate and sinful Men. This is more than we can do, we cannot always know the Good from the Bad; we are often impos'd upon by the Sheeps Clothing, and many times take them for Sheep or Lambs of Christ's Fold, that inwardly are but ravening Wolves; we are often deceiv'd by Disguises and smooth Pretences, and cannot always see thro the Vizards of Hypocrites.

But Christ knows the Hearts of all Men, and cannot be impos'd upon by any outward Shows; all things are naked and open to him, and no Cloke or Covering can hide our Offences from him: he knows the Wheat from the Chaff, the Sheep from the Goats, and can distinguish the sound and good Christian from the false and disguis'd Hypocrite; for

for he hath his Seal or Mark upon his People, and thereby knows who are his; he sets the Seal of his Holy Spirit upon them, whereby they are mark'd up for his Flock, and seal'd to the Day of Redemption. *Hereby shall we know* (saith St. John) *that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he hath given us; 1 John 3. 24.* And elsewhere, *He that hath not the Spirit of God, is none of his.* This is that inward Mark that is known to God only, and cannot so well be discern'd by us.

But there are some outward Signs or Badges, which may help us in some measure to know them also. As,

1. Christ himself hath told us, that hereby may we know, whether we are his Disciples, if we have Love one to another. Love is the Characteristick Mark or Badg of his Followers, and we may know who are his by the Stamp of Charity. Again, we may know them,

2. By their Meekness and Patience. A Sheep, we know, is a very quiet and harmless Creature, it often takes, but never does any harm; 'tis the Wolf and the Tyger that are apt to tear and to devour, and 'tis the Guise of the Wicked and the Ungodly to study and to do Mischief: whereas Christ's Followers labour to do all the Good they can to all Men, and never think of doing the least Evil to any. Again,

3. We know the Sheep, of all Creatures, are most us'd to keep and go together, and are least given to wander and stray from each other; 'tis the Wolf and the Goat that are wont to range, and the Creatures of Prey are most unwilling to be confin'd. In like manner, humble and good Christians are most willing to keep together in the Service of God, and are least inclin'd to break the Communion of Saints: whereas *they who separate themselves, are* (in St. Jude's Phrase) *sensual, having not the Spirit, Jude ver. 19.* By these and the like Marks, we may in some measure discover the true Flock of Christ, from the Herd of wicked and unreasonable Men. But whether we can discern them or not, Christ knows his Sheep, and is able to distinguish them from the Goats even in this World.

But Secondly and chiefly, Christ so knows his Sheep, as to make a final and eternal Separation and Distinction between them and others in the World to come; for we read in *Mat. 25.* that he will set his Sheep on the Right Hand, and the Goats on his Left; receiving the former into Eternal Life, and sending the latter into everlasting Damnation.

Thus

Thus Christ is said to know his Sheep; but how is he known of them? for he saith, *I know my Sheep, and are known of mine*: why, that is, as Sheep are wont to know the Shepherd, partly by his Voice, and partly by his going. Accordingly, Christ tells us of his Flock that they *hear his Voice, and follow him*. Where he alludes to the Custom of Shepherds in the Land of *Jewry*, who (as History tells us) did not, as the Shepherds of our Days do, go behind and drive the Sheep before them; but they were wont to go before the Sheep, and by making a Sound, or calling them by Names known to them, their Flocks were taught to follow or come after them: and hereunto these Words of our Saviour allude, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and they follow me*, ver. 3.

1. Christ's Sheep know his Voice; that is, they hear his Doctrine, and obey his Call: they do not shut their Ears, or turn the deaf Ear as others do, to his Precepts, but both are open and ready to receive Instruction; saying, with *Samuel, Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth*. Now the Voice of God is in the Holy Scriptures, as they are read and expounded to us by his Ministers; of whom he hath said, *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me, heareth him that sent me*. So that 'tis by Attendance on God's Word, and Obedience to it, that we are said to hear his Voice; and by that chiefly we may know, whether we are his Sheep, or belong to his Flock: which may be farther known,

2. By *following him*: for Christ's Sheep not only hear his Voice, but *follow him*; that is, they tread in the Steps of his holy Life, and walk in the Way that he hath chalk'd out for them. Sheep, we know, are apt to follow their Leader, and to go where they see others go before them. And we have all so much of the Sheep in us, as to be led more by Example than Precept; which should teach us to set before us the best Examples, and to follow the best Guides. And because we cannot have a better, our Saviour hath propounded himself to be our Leader and Guide; willing us to *learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in Heart*; and in the whole Course of our Lives to be *Followers of him as dear Children*.

To encourage us hereunto, our Saviour acquaints us in the next Verse with the intimate Knowledg and Dearness, that is between the Father and him with respect to us: *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down*

down my Life for the Sheep: that is, as the Father knoweth my Mind, and my Kindness towards you, so I know his Mind and Kindness to be the same; and 'tis by his Knowledge and Liking, that I lay down my Life for your Salvation: having perfect knowledge of his Will, and in this as in all other things yielding perfect Obedience to it. And then it follows, *Other Sheep I have, which are not of this Fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my Voice; and there shall be one Fold, and one Shepherd.* The Sheep that he then had, were those of the Jewish Nation, to whom he was first sent; *He came unto his own*, saith St. John, Chap. i. 12. that is, to the Jews, whom he styles *his own*, because they were of his own Nation and Blood, and distinguish'd from others by many high and eminent Privileges. Accordingly he told the Woman of Canaan, in the beginning of his Ministry, that he was *sent only to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, Mat. 15. That his first Mission was to reduce them, by preaching Repentance and performing his Miracles among them. But here he tells us, that after his Resurrection his Flock should not be confin'd within the Pales of *Judea*, but that he had other Sheep that belong'd not to that Fold; meaning the *Gentiles*, and other Parts of the Heathen World, who were gone astray after their Idols: them also (saith he) must I bring in, that they may hear my Voice and follow me, becoming my Disciples, by believing in, and obeying of me. And there shall be one Fold, that is, one Christian Church all the World over, join'd together in one Communion and Doctrine, and united in one Shepherd as the chief Head and Pastor of them all, to be govern'd by one Bishop of their Souls, that is, Christ himself, whilst he continu'd upon Earth, and after by his Apostles and their Successors to the end of the World.

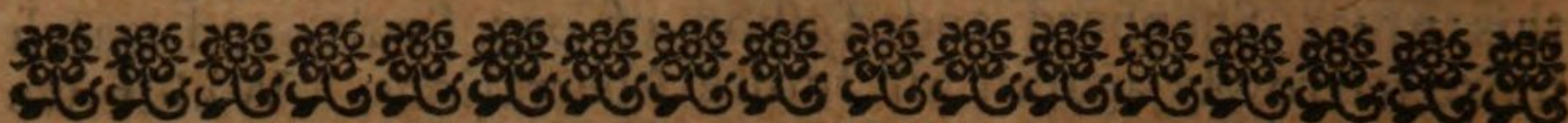
This is briefly the Substance of the Gospel for this Day, wherein we see how truly Christ call'd himself the good Shepherd, how well he knows his Sheep, and is known by them; together with the great Care he hath taken of them, not only while he was upon Earth, but since his ascending up in Heaven.

The Use that I shall make of it, shall be,

1. To exhort all good Christians to follow the Guidance and Conduct of this good Shepherd; and if at any time we have erred and stray'd from his Ways like lost Sheep, as
we

we have all reason daily to confess, let us return again to this great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, and watch more narrowly against all future Aberrations. Whilst we keep with him, we are safe in the Paths of Happiness; but if we leave him, we wander and walk in By-ways, where we lose our selves, and find nothing but our own Destruction.

2. Since there is but one Fold and one Shepherd, in which Christ hath united his whole Flock; let us all learn to keep together, and to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. There is now *neither Jew nor Gentile, Bond nor Free, but they are all one in Christ Jesus*: let us not then divide and separate from one another, when God hath so closely link'd and join'd us together. To break into several Parties and Factions, and to set up separate Meetings and Communion, is to make new Partition-Walls, when Christ hath pull'd down the old; and consequently to divide the one Body of Christ. Our Saviour's last Prayer in the behalf of his Disciples, was, *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art one in me, and I in thee, so they also may be one in us; that the World may believe that thou hast sent me*: John 17. 21, 22. And this Prayer of his was not only for his Disciples that were then alive and about him, but for all those that should after believe in his Name; that all who would be thought his Followers, should agree together in this Unity and godly Love, without any Division or Separation from each other. And this, he there intimates, would prove the best Demonstration of his Messiahship; for the World would sooner believe, that God had sent him, if his Disciples unite and agree together, than if they clash and fall into different Sects and Opinions. And as this was his last Prayer, so one of the last things he did, was to institute a Feast of Charity, to join them in one Communion; making it one of his last Requests to them, that they would often meet together at his Table, and there feed on his Body and Blood, in remembrance of what he had done and suffer'd for them. And by thus repairing together as one Flock to one Fold, he will hereafter separate his Sheep from the wandring Goats, setting the one at his right Hand in Bliss and Glory, and the other at his left in Shame and Misery. And when this chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive of him a Crown of Righteousness, that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us: which God grant, &c.



DISCOURSE LXXII.

The EPISTLE for the Third Sunday after
Easter.

1 Pet. ii. 11—18.

Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul: having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation, &c.

THE Collect for this Day lets us know, that Almighty God sheweth to them that be in Error the Light of his Truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of Righteousness; and from thence teaches to pray, that all who are admitted into the Fellowship of Christ's Religion, may eschew those things that are contrary to their Profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same.

Suitable hereunto, the Epistle for the Day shews us what those things are, which are contrary to our Profession; and likewise what those are, which are agreeable to the same: willing us to eschew the one, and to follow the other, as the Sequel of this Discourse will shew.

The Epistle begins with those things that are contrary to our Profession; and they are all *fleshly Lusts*, from which we are exhorted to *abstain*: *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as Pilgrims and Strangers, abstain from fleshly Lusts.* What those fleshly Lusts are, St. Paul tells us, Gal. 5. 19, 20. *The Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murder, Drunkenness, Revellings,*
and

and such-like: which things comprize all the corrupt Desires and Inclinations both of Soul and Body to all manner of Evil, as a slight View of them may easily inform us; call'd therefore *the old Man*, and *the whole Body of Sin*. That these things are contrary to our Profession, will be evident to any, who considers that our Christian Profession calls us to all manner of Purity and Holiness; whereas these lead Men to the grossest Impurity and Defilement. They are contrary to the Nature and Will of that God, whom we profess to worship, who is of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity. They are contrary to the Purity profess'd in Baptism, and the Vow and Covenant made therein, when we were wash'd from all Pollution in that Laver of Regeneration. In a word, they are contrary to the Nature, the Laws, and the whole Design of Christianity.

But how are we to abstain from these fleshly Lusts? Why, not only outwardly in the overt Acts, but inwardly in all the Desires, Motions, and Occasions of them; hating the Garment spotted with the Flesh, and avoiding all the Appearances of Evil.

Again, (2.) We must abstain not only from this or that fleshly Lust, which we can well enough dispense with, but wholly and intirely from all; not allowing our selves in any beloved Vice, nor sparing any one Branch, but laying the Ax to the very Root, and cutting down the whole Body; for one mortal Enemy may do a Man as much harm, as a whole Army; and a Viper in the Bosom may sting and wound more, than many others farther off.

(3.) We must abstain from fleshly Lusts truly and sincerely, not barely from a Principle of Fear and Shame; for that will only adjourn the Temptation to a fairer Opportunity, and then gratify it with greater greediness: but from a Principle of Love to God, and Hatred to Sin, and that will keep us from it as well in secret as in publick View.

Lastly, We must abstain from them not only now and then, but always; not returning with the Dog to his Vomit, or the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire; but keeping a constant and unspotted Purity, and so turn unto God, as never to return again to Folly.

This Abstinence from fleshly Lusts the Apostle here backs with two weighty Considerations:

1st, From our State and Condition here, which is not that of Citizens or Inhabitants, but of Pilgrims and Stran-

gers. Our City and Country is elsewhere, and we are now only travelling and making towards it; and therefore we are not to take up with the empty Pleasures and Satisfaction of this Life, where we have no abiding City, but to aspire after the nobler Joys and Delights of Heaven, where our Country and Conversation is, and where our Happiness must be.

2dly, From the Danger and Damage that fleshly Lusts do the Soul, for they wound and war against the Soul: they hurt the animal Soul, by impairing Life, and shortning our days; but they chiefly mischief the rational Soul, by debasing the Honour and Dignity of it, by destroying the Peace and Purity of it, by taking away the Freedom and Liberty of it. In a word, they hurt the present Tranquillity, and hinder the eternal Salvation of the Soul. These things are farther enlarg'd and urg'd in the *Practical Exposition of the Church-Catechism*, Part 1. Disc. 13. to which I refer the Reader, and proceed,

Secondly, From the things contrary to our Profession, to the things agreeable to the same. And of this kind the Apostle here mentions six or seven, viz. Honesty in our Dealings, Submission to Superiours, the right Use of our Christian Liberty, a general Respect to all Men, a particular Love to the Brotherhood, the Fear of God, and Honouring the King. These things agree well with our Christian Profession, and not only answer, but adorn it; which we are therefore call'd upon to follow, as will appear by speaking something particularly to each. And,

(1.) Of Honesty in our Dealings one with another. This is held forth in the next words, *ver. 12. Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.* Where by having our Conversation honest, we are to understand the rendring to all their Dues, or paying to every one their own, without taking or with-holding any thing from another. To this appertain Truth in our Words, Constancy to our Promises, Fidelity in our Bargains, Faithfulness in Trusts, with all other known Acts of Justice and Fair-dealing: these are often in Holy Scripture prest upon us, and recommended to us as the Ornament and Glory of our Christian Profession. St. Paul urges them with great Earnestness upon the *Philippians*, Chap. 4. 8. Finally, Brethren,

thren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praise, think on these things: for they are lovely in themselves, and carry a good Report with them. All Men commend just Dealing, and report of them that practise it, that God is in them of a truth. Whereas Dishonesty and Double-dealing are scandalous and dishonourable, they bring an evil Report, and disparage both our Person and Profession. So the Apostle intimates here, that *whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers*; implying, that fraudulent and false Dealings open Mens mouths, and make them speak all manner of Evil of them that practise them. And therefore the Apostle cautions Christians against them, saying, *Let no Man defraud or go beyond his Brother in any matter, for God and Man are the Avengers of those things*; 1 Thess. 4. They brand Men with Shame, and fill them with Confusion of Face. For which reason, we are exhorted here to the contrary Courses of Vertue and Honesty, for the honour of our selves and our Profession; and likewise, that Men by the good Works they shall behold in us, may glorify God in the Day of Visitation: that is, may think and speak honourably of the Ways of God, when they are under any Trouble or Tribulation for forsaking them.

(2.) Another thing we are to follow, as agreeable to our Profession, is Submission to Governours, both supreme and subordinate. This we have in the next words, *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are sent by him, for the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.* ver. 13. Where by submitting to every Ordinance of Man, is meant Obedience to all human Laws that are not contrary to the Laws of God. And this Obedience is here requir'd for the Lord's sake; that is, partly by virtue of God's Command, who hath put this Duty upon us; and partly by virtue of his own Authority, with which he hath invested them, as his Ministers and Vicegerents: in both which respects St. Paul wills us to be subject not only for Wrath, or Fear of Punishment, but for Conscience sake; Rom. 13. 5. And this Obedience is to be paid first to the King, as the Supreme Ruler and Governour of the Country where we live; and secondly, to inferiour Governours and Officers, who are sent and commission'd by him, as acting by his Authority. Both which are urg'd upon us from the two great Ends and De-

signs of Government; which are, *the Punishment of Evil-doers, and the Praise of them that do well*: that is, for the suppressing of Vice, and the encouraging of Vertue; that we may live quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty.

That this is agreeable to our Profession, we may learn from the next words; *For so is the Will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the Ignorance of foolish Men*: meaning, that the Christian Religion obliges us to this Submission to all our Superiours, so that to live in obedience and subjection to them, is to act suitable to the Rules of Christianity; and to do otherwise, is to act quite contrary to them. And because Disobedience to the Higher Powers may justly reflect upon our Christian Profession, as encouraging Faction and Sedition, and so may charge Christians for turbulent Persons, that seek to turn the World upside down; therefore the Apostle wills us by no means to be wanting in our Duty and Subjection to Superiours, but to be more willing to suffer under than to disobey them; that we may stop the mouths of Gainsayers, and silence the Ignorance of foolish Men, taking off all occasions of Reproach, and leaving them nothing justly to object against us. Which will lead,

(3.) To another thing agreeable to our Profession: and that is, the right Use of our Christian Liberty, deliver'd in these words, *ver. 16. As free, and not using your Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciousness, but as the Servants of God*. Where the Apostle acknowledges our Freedom from the *Mosaick Yoke*, but would not have it stretch'd so far, as to think it a Freedom from the Yoke of Government. There were some in the Apostles days, as there are still in ours, that urg'd Christian Liberty, as an Immunity from Obedience to human Laws; and because they were freed from the Rites and Ceremonies of *Moses's Law*, which only shadow'd out things to come, would therefore think themselves freed from observing the Rules of Order and Decency enjoin'd in the Christian Church. Now this is to use their Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciousness; for this Pretence is quite contrary to the Precepts and Practices of Christ and his Apostles, who in all such lawful and indifferent things, rather exceeded than fell short in their Obedience to them; as might be easily prov'd in many Particulars. This Abuse of Christian Liberty occasion'd many and great Reflections upon Christianity in the Apostles time, which made them
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take no small pains in vindicating it from such unjust Aspersions: and the like Reflections have been too justly rais'd against it, by the Stubbornness and Disobedience of some Christians in our days under the same pretence, with whom no less pains hath been taken to set them right in this matter. In short, Submission and Obedience to the Higher Powers is a thing agreeable to our Profession, being enjoin'd by the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles; and all Refractoriness and Disobedience to good Laws, is directly opposite to it, being condemn'd by both: and therefore, as we pray this day, we are to follow the one, and eschew the other. For to set up a Pretence of Liberty against it, is to use it for a Cloke of Maliciousness: to prevent which, *St. Peter* here directs us to use it, *as the Servants of God*; that is, to remember still that we are under his command, and to admit those Bounds and Restraints which he hath set to our Liberty: among which, that of Duty and Obedience to Superiours is one of the chiefest. We are free in all things, wherein God or his Ministers have not interpos'd; but where they have ty'd us up by their Precepts or Prohibitions, there we are to obey God in the first place, and his Ministers for his sake. To do this, is to act becomingly to our Profession; to do otherwise, is to blemish and bespatter it.

(4.) Another thing agreeable to our Profession, is the giving to every Man the Honour due to him. This is here recommended to us in these words, *ver. 17. Honour all Men.* Honour in general is the Acknowledgment of some Excellency in another, and the behaving our selves towards him accordingly: And because there are different Degrees of Worth and Excellency in sundry Persons, as some are above others in Parts and Learning, others in Place, Dignity, Office, and the like; therefore different Measures of Honour are to be meted out to them. God is to be honour'd first and above all, by reason of his transcendent Excellencies and Perfections: Good Men for their Vertue and Goodness are to be honour'd and respected above loose and profligate Persons: Men in Place and Authority above those that are subjected to them. And generally all Superiours in Dignity and Desert, are to have a greater share of Honour, than those that are inferiour to them. This, Justice and Equity requires of us, being the giving to every Man his due; and is a Decency in Religion, as well as in Good Manners.

But there is some kind of Excellency or other granted to all Men: for they have all the Image of God stamp'd upon them, they are all Partakers of the same human Nature, they all came out of the same Hands, and were made for the same Ends; having Bodies consisting of the same Parts, and Souls endow'd with the same Faculties, being alike wonderfully made and framed in both: And upon that account, some kinds and degrees of Honour are due to all Men. For setting aside some few outward Differences of Fortune, Attire, Attendance, or other worldly Advantages, we are all equal in Nature; and as we expect to receive Honour and good Usage our selves, so are we to be as ready to give it to others. So that this Precept of honouring all Men, forbids the despising of any, even the meanest Person: *Why dost thou set at nought thy Brother?* saith St. Paul; and *he that despiseth the Poor, dishonoureth his Maker*, saith Solomon. In a word, to give to all Men the Honour due to them, well suits our Profession; and to do otherwise, is to stain and disgrace it. And as we are thus to honour all Men, so are we here commanded,

(5.) To have a more particular Love to our Christian Brethren. This is held forth to us in these words, *Love the Brotherhood*. Where two things are to be briefly enquir'd into, viz. Who we are to understand by the Brotherhood, and what is the Love that is to be paid to them.

For the first, there is a Brotherhood by Nature appertaining to all Mankind; in which sense all Men are Brethren, partaking of the same human Nature, having the same Father in Heaven, and descending from the same earthly Parents. *Adam* and *Eve*. And there is a Brotherhood by Grace, contracted by a new Birth in Baptism; whereby we become Brethren in Christ, begotten by the same Spirit, professing the same Faith, and born to the same Inheritance; the former belongs to us as Men, the latter as Christians: and this latter is the Brotherhood that we are here principally requir'd to love; for tho there is a general Love due to all Mankind, as partaking the same Nature, yet there is a more particular Love due to our Christian Brethren, as professing the same Faith, and being Members of the same mystical Body of Christ. And in this sense it is, that we find Brethren so often mention'd by the Apostles in the New Testament.

But what is the Love that we are here commanded to pay them? Why, that consists partly in the inward Affection

fection of the Heart, in wishing all Good to them; and partly in the outward Expressions of the Hand, in doing them all good Offices, as Opportunity offers. Both which the Apostle would have in some measure *done to all Men, but more especially to those of the Household of Faith*; Gal. 6. 10. The Seat of all true Love is in the Heart, and all that we say or do, if it come not thence, is rather the Effect of Hypocrisy than any true Love. And therefore our Love to the Brethren must be seated there, and proceed from thence; this is call'd *Love unfeigned*, 1 Pet. 1. 22. *Love out of a pure Heart*, 1 Tim. 1. 5. and *Love without Dissimulation*, Rom. 12. 9. But as true Love is rooted in the Heart, so must it sprout forth and appear by the Hand; as Jeshu said to Jonadab, *Is thy Heart right? if it be, then give me thy Hand*. True Love, like a true Faith, must discover itself by good Works, or else both will be found but cold and dead. He does not love the Brotherhood, whatever he may pretend, that is not willing to embrace all Opportunities of doing good to the Souls, the Bodies, the Credit and Estate of his Christian Brethren: to do so, is highly agreeable to our Christian Profession, of which Love is the Badg; and to do otherwise, is grossly to thwart and contradict it.

(6.) The *Fear of God* is another thing here prescrib'd, as agreeable to our Profession; and that consists in such an awful Dread of the Divine Majesty, as makes us unwilling to offend him: 'tis ground'd on a due and deep Sense of his infinite Greatness, Power, Wisdom, Goodness and Truth; which things well consider'd will strike the Mind with such a Fear and Reverence of him, as will incline us to please, and keep us from displeasing of him. And therefore a good Man is describ'd to be one that *feareth God*; and a bad Man to be one that *hath no Fear of him before his eyes*. So that to be true to our Profession, we must endeavour always to keep up this Fear of God, and to avoid every thing that is inconsistent with it.

Lastly, To this Fear of God is here coupled the *Honouring of the King*. Both these must go together, to compleat the Character of a good Christian; for either alone, or in opposition to the other, will never denominate any such. To set up the Fear of God as a Pretence for dishonouring of the King, is the Sin of Disloyalty; and to make the honouring of the King a Plea for dishonouring of God, is Profaneness and Hypocrisy. The Apostle here hath set us

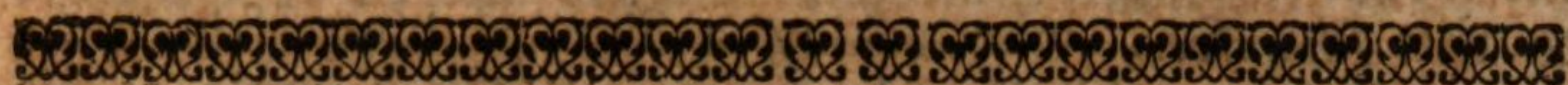
right in this matter, by joining the Fear of God and the Honour of the King together; the one having a necessary Connexion and Dependence on the other. We are to fear and honour God for his own sake, and we are to fear and honour the King for God's sake; he having deriv'd his Power and Authority upon him for our Good. God hath stiled them *his Anointed*, and given them his own Name, *I have said ye are Gods*, to raise them above the level of the World, and to procure to them the Honour and Veneration of Mankind; and we cannot truly honour God, without honouring of them.

For a Close then of this Discourse, let us carefully eschew all sinful Lusts, as contrary and disagreeable to our Profession; and follow Honesty in our Dealings, Submission to our Superiours, with a right Use of our Christian Liberty; giving Honour to all Men, Love to our Brethren; and joining to these the Fear of God, and Honouring the King, as things agreeable to the Religion we profess, and answering the Ends and Designs of it.

To this we stand oblig'd by the Decency of the thing, it being highly fit and reasonable, that we should be and do as we pretend: and likewise by the great Indecency of the contrary; it being grossly absurd and unbecoming, to pretend to great things, and to do nothing like it. Again,

The Honour of our Persons and Profession requires us to walk worthy of both. When we live by the Rules and Precepts of Christianity, we bring Credit to our Religion and our selves, whereas both are disparag'd by an unsuitable Conversation; yea, we reflect Dishonour upon Christ, and bring an evil Report upon his Ways, when we act contrary to what we profess, and wear his Livery only as a Cloke to hide our sinful Practices.

Lastly, Our own Interest obliges us to act suitable to our Profession; it being a matter of great Comfort to us here, and of a much greater Reward hereafter: for such will surely find an entrance into their Master's Joy, and be made for ever happy with him; when the titular and nominal Christian, that usurps the Name of Christ without living answerable to it, shall be for ever excluded from his Presence, and have his Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers: which will concern us above all things to prevent.



DISCOURSE LXXIII.

The G O S P E L for the Third Sunday after *Easter*.

John xvi. 16 ——— 23.

Jesus said to his Disciples, A little while and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while and ye shall see me ; because I go to the Father. Then said some of the Disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us ? A little while and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while and ye shall see me. We cannot tell what he saith, &c.

THE time of our Blessed Saviour's returning to his Father drawing nigh, he thought fit to impart it to his Disciples, and to prepare them for it ; to which end he here drops it to them, as it were in a Riddle or dark Saying, which puzzled them at first, and put them hard to it to find out the meaning. *Jesus said unto them, A little while and ye shall not see me : and again, A little while, and ye shall see me.* Which words seem to make him a sort of Apparition, that would disappear awhile, and then be seen again ; and after that appear again, and then vanish away. The Sense whereof the Disciples could not presently apprehend. *A little while and ye shall not see me ; and again, a little while and ye shall see me.* The words are ambiguous, and admit of a double Construction, as they relate either to his Resurrection or Ascension. As they relate to his Resurrection, the Sense of them is this : *Within a little while I shall be put to death, and be taken from you ; during which time being laid in the Grave, and under the Powers of Death and Darkness, ye shall not see me.* And again, *In a little while after, that is, after three Days, I shall rise again, and then ye shall see me.* Tho the Shadow of Death and the Grave may hide my Face from you awhile, yet in a little time I shall be lifted up out of the Grave, and then will I lift up the Light of my Countenance upon you, and you shall see me again. In this Sense
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the words are much of the same Import with those he spoke to the *Pharisees*, who asking a Sign of him, said unto them, *Dissolve this Temple* (meaning, the Temple of his Body) *and in three Days I will raise it up*; John 2. 19. Where by the razing or dissolution of the Temple, was meant the crucifying and putting our Saviour to death, by which the Disciples lost the sight of him; and by raising up this Temple again was meant the renewing or restoring him to Life again, by which they recover'd the sight of him, and saw him again: And all this was not long a doing, no longer than three Days, which made our Saviour speak of both as of Matters transacted in a little time, a little while; that is, during the short time of my lying in the Grave, you shall not see me. And again, *a little while*, that is, within the space of three Days, and ye shall see me; for 'tis not possible for me to be held by Death, being to arise and go to my Father.

But there is, 2dly, another Sense of these words, and perhaps more suitable to the Occasion of their delivery; and that is, as they relate to our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven, and so the meaning of them must be this: *Within a little while*, I must leave the World, and go to my Father that sent me, and *then ye shall not see me*. And again, *in a little while* after, I shall come again to judg the Quick and the Dead; and then *ye shall see me*. And our Saviour's adding those words as a Reason, *Because I go to the Father*, seems to refer the words more to this sense, than the former; for Christ's going to the Father was not by his Resurrection, but by his Ascension: And 'twas usual with our Saviour to express his Ascension in that phrase, *I go to my Father* (saith he) *and your Father*, John 20. 17. And elsewhere, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World*: Again, *I leave the World and go to the Father*. So that by these Expressions, the Sense of the Words I am discoursing of seems to be this: A little while, during my short stay in the World, ye shall see me; in a little while I shall leave the World, and ye shall not see me, because I go to the Father: And again, In a little while I shall come back to you, to receive you to my self, and then you shall see me again. Howbeit,

The Disciples, it seems, were then so slow of Understanding, that they knew not the meaning of those sayings; for the next Verses tell us, that *some of them said among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us? A little while and ye shall not see me: And again, A little while and ye shall see me; because*

because I go to the Father. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, a little while? We know not what he saith. Where the manner of expressing it, by doubling and trebling the Matter in question, shew'd their gross Ignorance and Misunderstanding of it, that they knew nothing of the matter, and could not tell what to make of it.

That which we may observe from hence is, the Manner of our Saviour's dealing with and instructing of his Disciples; which was many times by Parables, Proverbs, and dark Sentences, which they did not presently apprehend: and this he did not so much to puzzle, as to put them upon Study and Meditation, to exercise their Parts, and to excite them to a fuller and farther Search into the Truths deliver'd to them. Plain and easy Truths, like plain Food, are apt to be despis'd, as not worthy of any great notice or regard; and therefore he mix'd something of difficulty with his Doctrine, to employ their Minds, and to put them upon a farther Enquiry into it. Accordingly we find, when he instructed his Followers in the Duty of Hearing by the Parable of the Sower, they came to him and asked him, saying, *What may this Parable be?* And in the Parables of the Tares, the Vineyard, and other Parables, they came and prayed him; saying, *Master expound to us these Parables:* which he readily did, to inform their Judgments, and direct their Practices. In like manner, the Disciples here ignorant of Christ's meaning, were willing to be instructed in it: so the next words declare; *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among your selves, of that I said, A little while and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while and ye shall see me?* Where finding them solicitous about the understanding of his words, he thought fit by degrees to give them satisfaction. Indeed, we cannot be more willing to learn than he is to teach; and if we will do the Will of our Heavenly Father, we shall surely know the Truths that be of God. Christ delights to communicate his Mind to docile and tractable Disciples; and if we are desirous to know, he is ever ready to discover to us the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven: *The Meek he will guide in Judgment,* (saith the Psalmist) *and the Humble he will teach his way;* Psal. 25. 'Tis but to open our Hearts to desire, our Mouths to ask, and our Ears to hear, and we shall not want Knowledg enough to make us wise unto Salvation: *For the Secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him, and he will teach them his Covenant.*

But what was our Saviour's Answer to their Enquiry about this matter? Why, it was no direct Answer to what they ask'd, but yet it was such as included that, and somewhat more, as we may see by his following Answer in these words: *Verily, verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the World shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your Sorrow shall be turn'd into Joy.* Where he intimates to them his going away from them, and that that would be a time of Mourning and Lamentation to them. The World indeed (he tells them) would rejoice, as hoping to gain some Advantage upon them by his Absence. Solomon tells us, that *there is a time for all things under Heaven, a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; Eccles. 3. 1, 4.* Now Christ's withdrawing from his Church is the time of Weeping and Lamentation to them, not only because they lose the Company of their best Friend, but because they are then expos'd to the Rage and Fury of their worst Enemies. The Church is in Scripture often stil'd the Spouse of Christ, who is said to be married to it. Now nothing, you know, is more irksom to a Spouse, or harder to be borne, than the Absence of the Husband, especially if it be long, and the Return uncertain; this overwhelms her with Sorrow, and makes her restless and impatient. Such was Christ's leaving his Disciples, and such in some measure is his present Absence from his Church; a time of Danger and Distress, and consequently a time of Trouble, and of great Thoughts of Heart. When the Disciples of John ask'd our Saviour, why they and the Pharisees fasted often, and his Disciples fasted not, he answer'd them, that their time of Fasting and Mourning was not yet come; *for can the Children of the Bride-chamber (saith he) mourn, while the Bridegroom is with them? But the Days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast; Matth. 9. 15.* Where the time of Christ's abode upon Earth with his Disciples, is compar'd to the celebrating of a Marriage-Feast, and that is rather a time of Joy, than of Fasting and Mourning; but when the Days came of his departing from them, and going to his Father, then was the time of Sorrow and Fasting. Accordingly, when our Saviour told his Disciples, that *a little while and ye shall not see me*; he immediately adds, *Verily, verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament.* Meaning, that they would see much Trouble, when they had lost the sight of him, and find cause enough to be sorry and bewail his departure:

ture: and this he asserts with the double Asseveration of verily, verily, to shew the Certainty, as well as the Sadness of it. The main Comfort of their Lives depending upon the Sight and Presence of their Saviour, his removing from them, could not but be a Matter of Tears and Grief. And as this was a time of Sorrow and Sadness to the Disciples, so was it a time of Joy to their Enemies; *Ye shall weep and lament* (saith Christ) *but the World shall rejoice*: They will be glad to see you left destitute, that you may lie at their mercy, and they have their Will upon you. 'Tis the Joy of the Wicked to do mischief. *David* complain'd of his Enemies, that they *took counsel against him, saying, God hath forsaken him, persecute him, and take him, for there is none to deliver him*; Psal. 71. 11. When Christ was gone, the World would conclude, that God had forsaken the Disciples, and so they might execute their Malice and Hatred upon them, for there was none to deliver them: And so they in some measure found; for they soon met with Trouble and Tribulation from the World, as Christ had told them, and groan'd under a heavy Burden of Persecution. But for their Comfort he tells them, that *tho they shall be sorrowful a while, yet their Sorrow shall be turned into Joy, for in a little while* (saith he) *ye shall see me again, and that shall be unto you a time of Joy and Rejoicing*: the Light whereof shall break forth from under the Clouds of Sorrow and Persecution, and after shine with a bright and undisturb'd Lustre; your Mourning shall be shortly turn'd into Rejoicing, and the Mirth of the Wicked into Sadness.

This our Saviour illustrates, in the following words, by a *Woman in travail*; who during her *Travail hath Sorrow, because her Hour is come*; but as soon as she is deliver'd of a Child, she remembreth no more the Anguish, for joy that a *Man is born into the World*: that is, your Heaviness at my going away, like the Pangs of a Woman in labour, hath given you no small Trouble, and filled your Hearts with Sorrow; but as soon as ye shall see me appear again, all your Pangs of Sorrow will be over and forgotten, for joy that I am come again into the World. *Ye now have Sorrow* (saith he) *at my leaving of you, which you take to be a time of Mourning*; but *I will see you again, and your Heart shall rejoice*: for that will be truly a time of Joy, when I shall come again in Glory to subdue all your Enemies, and to carry you away in Triumph with my self.

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Neither will this be only a short transitory Joy, that soon vanishes away, but such as will be durable, and lasting: for your Joy (saith he) *no Man taketh from you.* 'Tis not liable to change, as the Joy of the Wicked is, or to sink into a deeper Melancholy; but 'tis permanent, ever fresh, and never ceasing. Worldly Joy is often turn'd into Sorrow; it lies in the power of Men in some measure to take it away, and to deprive us of it. Every one, even the worst of Men, may give trouble to the best; and that may somewhat abate their Joy here, and create them some Disquiet: but Christ, at his second Coming, will make them abundant amends, and double and treble their Joys, for the Sorrows they have sustain'd for his sake. The Joys of the World, how sweet and pleasant soever they may appear, have yet great Mixtures and Alloys of Bitterness; in the midst of Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, and the Mirth of the Wicked soon ends in sighing and loathing. *Solomon* compares the Joy of the Wicked to the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, which makes a short Blaze and Noise, but both are quickly gone; and the Apostle elsewhere resembles it to a Vapor, which appears gay for a while, and then vanishes away. But our Saviour entertains his Followers with no such fleeting and transitory Delights, but reserves for them Joys unspeakable and full of Glory; a Foretaste whereof he gives them here in this Life, but keeps the full Draught of them for hereafter, when he shall say unto them, *Enter into your Master's Joy.*

This is briefly the Sense and Scope of the Gospel for this Day; from whence we may learn,

I. The Manner of our Saviour's dealing with his Disciples, which was with the greatest Tenderness and Affection. He knew that his going away, howsoever they heard it, would be a matter of Sorrow to them; and that his going away without telling them of it, might so far overwhelm them, as to prove too hard for their Faith, and lead them into Infidelity: and therefore, to prevent these Evils, he by soft and easy Expressions drops it to them, telling them, that *a little while, and ye shall not see me*; to signify, that his Absence would not be long: and again, *A little while, and ye shall see*; to let them know, that he would shortly come to them again, to their greater comfort. Whereby, like a tender Mother, he sought to wean them from him a while, that he might give them greater Tokens of his Affection

fection after. And he bears still the same Affection and Tenderness for all his Followers, assisting them with his Grace, and allowing for all their Infirmities; and nothing but an obstinate Contempt of his Person and Precepts can turn his Bowels from us: which should enkindle the Flames of Love in our Breasts, and set us a longing for the Joy and Happiness of his Presence.

2. From the Shortness of our Saviour's stay, and the Certainty and Suddenness of his coming again, we may learn patiently to bear the hard Usage or Inconveniences we may meet with in the mean time. This World is a Place of Misery and Trouble, a Valley of Tears and Sorrow; we enter upon it crying, and go on our way in it weeping, till Death comes to dry up our Tears, and to drive away Sighing and Sobbing from us. Our Saviour told his Disciples, that in the World they should have Tribulation; and *ye now have Sorrow, but be of good comfort* (saith he) *I have overcome the World*; and your Sorrow shall be shortly turn'd into Joy. The Apostle stiles all our Afflictions here *light Afflictions*, because they are but for a moment; and considering the *exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory they work out for us*, he reckons them not worthy to be compar'd with it, and much less to be complain'd of. Our Life is but short, and therefore the Troubles of it cannot be long; Christ will come again in a little time, and rid us out of all. Let us then patiently bear with his Absence a while, and the Evils we may suffer by it; for *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*. We are content (you know) to part with a Friend a while, in hopes of his speedy Return; and the Inconveniences of his Absence are abundantly recompens'd by the Joys of his Presence. Our Saviour bid his Disciples not to be dismay'd at his withdrawing a while from them, promising to supply the present Defects of his Absence with the Comforts of his Holy Spirit, and to make them better amends by the much greater Joys of his future Presence. The same Arguments of Consolation are still administer'd to us, to encourage us to bear up under all the Difficulties of this Life, in which even the best Men are permitted to have their share.

3. From the vast Difference that there is between the Joys and Sorrows of the Wicked and the Righteous, we may learn to have low Thoughts of the one, and to set a high Price and Value upon the other. The Joys of the
Wicked

Wicked are trifling and transitory, mingled with secret Trouble and Regret, and their sweetest Delights turn to Gall and Bitterness in the end; for which reason, *Solomon* makes all their *Mirth* to be no better than *Madness*, for so it will certainly prove at last. And as for the Troubles that befall the Wicked here, they are but the beginnings of Sorrow, and lead to endless weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth hereafter: so that the Wicked can take no comfort either in their Joys or Sorrows, but reap nothing but Disappointment and a Curse in both.

Whereas, on the other hand, the Joys of the Righteous are pure and unmix'd, solid and lasting; they give present ease, and flow at last into *Rivers of Pleasure at God's right Hand for evermore*. *Your Heart shall rejoice*, saith our Saviour: 'tis an inward substantial Joy, that leaves no Sting or Remorse behind it. *And your Joy no Man taketh from you*; 'tis out of the reach of any earthly Person to diminish it, and no human Power or Policy can deprive you of it; call'd therefore an everlasting and never-fading Joy. *For I will see you again* (saith he to his Disciples) *and take you to my self*. And if the sight of him for a few days after his Resurrection did so revive the Hearts of his Disciples, what Transports of Joy must possess them and us to see and enjoy him for ever? And sure we may well enough bear with his Absence a while, when his Return will be to so good purpose, to reward our short Sufferings with endless Bliss, and to exchange the Cross for a Crown of Glory. Wherefore,

Lastly, Let us prepare and long for his coming again; that as the Spouse earnestly looks for her absent Husband, so we may wait and long for the Bridegroom of our Souls, to be receiv'd into his Embraces, and to be made for ever happy in his Presence. In a word, let us pray him to hasten his Kingdom, and not to delay his Coming, that we may be made *like him*, and for ever see him as he is. *Ever so come Lord Jesus, come quickly*. Amen.





DISCOURSE LXXIV.

The EPISTLE for the fourth Sunday after
Easter.

St. James i. 17—22.

Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of First-Fruits of his Creatures; &c.

THE Collect for this Day minds us, that 'tis God alone that can order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men; and therefore prays him to turn our Love to the things which he commandeth, and our Desire to the things that he doth promise; that so, among the various and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may be surely fix'd there, where true Joys are to be found. Accordingly the Epistle for the Day acquaints us with the Author of all the good things we receive or expect, *ver. 17.* instancing in one especial and particular Gift of the Holy Spirit, *ver. 18.* and inferring thence some good and useful Lessons, *ver. 19, 20, &c.*

The Epistle begins with the Author of all the good things we enjoy or expect, in these words: *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, &c.* Where we have,

First, The sundry sorts or kinds of good things, compris'd under every good Gift, and every perfect Gift.

Secondly, The Spring and Fountain whence they flow, and from whom they come; they are from above, and come down from the Father of Lights.

Thirdly, The unchangeable Nature of the Donor, with whom is no Variableness, nor shadow of Turning. I begin,
Vol. IV. Qq *First,*

First, With the sundry sorts or kinds of good things here mention'd, and compris'd in a Verse either designedly made, or casually hit upon, Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ, καὶ πάν δώρημα τέλειον, *Every good Gift and every perfect Gift*: which may be thus distinguish'd: By *every good Gift*, we may understand all temporal Gifts, or the good things of this Life, which chiefly relate to the Body; such as Life, Health, Wealth, Honour, Power, and the like, with all things conducing thereunto: all which are the Blessings of God, and so may justly be reckon'd in the number of good Gifts. By *every perfect Gift*, we are to understand all spiritual Gifts, or the good things of the other Life, which relate chiefly to the Welfare of our Souls; such as Christ's giving himself to us, his giving the Holy Ghost, with all the Gifts and Graces of it, his giving the Gospel, the Holy Sacraments, with all other means of Grace and hopes of Glory: all which being the highest Blessings that God can give, are justly stil'd by the name of *Perfect Gifts*. Indeed these are both good and perfect Gifts, yea, of all good things the best, and of all perfect things the most perfect; being (as one hath describ'd them) the Gifts of Perfection, and the Perfection of all other Gifts.

Secondly, But whence come these Gifts, or from whom do they flow? The Answer to that will lead us to the Spring and Fountain of them, which St. James here tells us *is from above*, and that they *come down from the Father of Lights*: which words declare God to be the Author of them, and that every good and every perfect Gift, that is, all Blessings temporal, spiritual, and eternal, descend wholly from him, as will easily appear by a short View of them. For temporal Blessings; Life, which is the first and greatest of them, is entirely owing to him, for *he giveth us Life, and Breath, and all things; and 'tis in him that we live, move, and have our Being*: Acts 17. 25. Health, the next Blessing to that, is likewise wholly from God; whom David therefore often stiles, the *God of his Health*. Hence we find God declaring by the Prophet, *I will restore Health unto thee, and will heal all thy Wounds*; Jer. 30. 17. And, Chap. 33. 6. *Behold, I will bring Health, and reveal unto them abundance of Peace*. Wealth, another great Blessing of this Life, is by Solomon said to be given by God, Eccl. 6. 2. And elsewhere, *The Blessing of God maketh rich*.

rich. For Power, St. Paul tells us, that *all Power is of God*, Rom. 13. And our Saviour told *Pilate*, that *he could have no Power over him, unless it were given him from above.*

So likewise Honour, and all other worldly Advantages, are often stil'd the Gifts of God; yea, the Sun never shines upon our Heads, but it directs our Contemplation to the great Father of Lights, who guides its Course, and gives it all its Influence. There is not a Shower falls upon the Ground, but bids us to look up to God as the Fountain, who opens the Windows of Heaven, and sendeth forth Rain to water the Earth.

Thus we see every good Gift or temporal Blessing is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, that is, from him that made the Sun, Moon, and Stars, those great Lights of Heaven; not from the Lights themselves, as the Heathens vainly imagin'd, and therefore worshipp'd the whole Host of Heaven, but from the Father of those Lights, who first kindled and set them up.

And as every good, so every perfect or spiritual Gift is from above, and cometh down from the same Father of Lights: the great invaluable Gift of the Holy Ghost, descended thence, and lighted upon the Heads of the Apostles and others, inspiring them with its Gifts and Graces, for the enlightning and edifying the Church of Christ. From thence it is, that we receive the Light of the Gospel to direct us, the Light of the Holy Spirit to comfort us, the Light of Grace to sanctify us, and the Light of Glory to reward and crown us. Now God is the Father of all these Lights, which he imparts to his Children, *giving them Grace and Glory, and with-holding no good thing from them that lead a Godly Life*: All which Gifts, both good and perfect, are from above, and come down from this Father of Lights;

Thirdly, With whom (as St. James affirms in the next words) *is no Variableness, neither shadow of Turning*: where the Apostle alludes and refers to the Sun, which next under God is the Father of Lights, for it gives Light to the whole World, and shines to all the Parts of it. But yet St. James here advances God, the great Father of Lights, far above it; for the Sun hath its Variations and Turnings, it hath every day its Rising and Setting, in the Morning moving and mounting up to the Meridian, which maketh High-Noon; and from thence declining and going down in the Evening, till it leave us in the dark, and that

maketh Night. This is by Astronomers, and by the Apostle in the Text, call'd *παλλὰξ*, the Parallax, or different Habitude and Appearance of the Sun in its daily Motion from *East* to *West*. And as it hath its Variation, so hath it its Turning too; for it sometimes goes farther from us, and then 'tis Winter; sometimes it comes nearer to us, and then 'tis Summer: and this it doth every Year, successively moving from one Hemisphere to the other. And this is call'd *τροπή*, or the Sun's turning or moving towards the Tropicks, in his yearly Course from *North* to *South*, which casts different shadows upon the several Inhabitants of the Earth: Thus it is with the Sun.

But with God the great Father of Lights (saith our Apostle) *there is no such Variableness, nor shadow of Turning*. He hath no Rising or Setting, but is constant in sending out his Rays upon us; *he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and changeth not*. He gives forth his Light without any mixture of shade, and is still pouring out his Gifts and Benefits upon us; and that too without any Merit or Desert of ours, but merely of his own good Will and Pleasure: for so the next words tell us, *Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of First-Fruits of his Creatures*: where his begetting us with the Word of Truth, is his regenerating us by the Gospel, by which we are made Christians, and Heirs of everlasting Salvation. Thus St. Paul declar'd himself, to be the Instrument of begetting the Corinthians thro the Gospel, 1 Cor. 4. 15. And St. Peter minds Christians of their being *born again to a new Life, by the incorruptible Seed of God's Word, which abideth for ever*; 1 Pet. 1. 23. Now this being born again, was the translating them from a State of Heathenism, to the embracing of Christianity, which is elsewhere describ'd by a *turning them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*; which is here said to be done *with the Word of Truth*: which discover'd to them the Error of their former ways, and inclin'd them to receive the Truth as it is in Jesus. As in the first Creation God said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*; by which he turn'd the rude unform'd Chaos into an orderly Structure: so, in the new Creation, God's Word brings a convincing Light upon the Soul, which dispels the former Darkness of Error, and introduces the Light and Love of Divine Truths; and this is his begetting of us with the Word of Truth: which Favour being first granted to the Apostles
and

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and Primitive Christians, who were first call'd to this Dignity, as we read, *Eph. i. 12.* St. James, who was one of them, here styles them *A kind of First-Fruits of his new Creatures*, referring to those that follow'd and grew up after them: all which he ascribes, not to any Worth or Merit in our selves, but entirely to God's own free Will and Pleasure. From whence he infers some weighty and necessary Duties, saying, in the next Verse, *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, let every Man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to Wrath.*

1. Since the Word of God hath so great an Efficacy, and so good an Influence upon the Mind, let every one be ready to hear and receive it. The Ear is the Instrument of Instruction, and Knowledg as well as Faith comes by Hearing. He that will not lend an ear to Wisdom, will never be wise; and he that will not hear, can never learn. *Moses* frequently call'd upon the *Israelites*, saying, *Hear, O Israel, and hearken unto the Voice of the Lord:* And God himself upbraids their Backwardness, saying, *Israel would not hear, and my People will not understand.* And therefore to quicken them, the Prophets generally begin their Prophecies with, *Hear ye the Word of the Lord;* to open their Ears, and bespeak their Attention. *Solomon* often calls upon us by the name of Sons and Children, to hear and receive Instruction: *My Son* (saith he) *incline thine Ear to Wisdom, and apply thy Heart to Understanding; so shall it be as Life unto thy Soul, and a Grace unto thy Neck.* We are wont to listen with Reverence and Attention to the Words and Speeches of wise Men; but how much more should we do so to the Word of God, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg? Our Saviour pronounces those blessed, that hear his Word, and delight in his Instructions. The Angels of the seven Churches call upon all Persons, in these words, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* God hath given us Ears, not to be as Sponges, to suck in all obscene and filthy Discourse, or to listen unto Vanity; but to be as Fans to separate the Chaff from the Wheat, and to distinguish between Good and Evil, receiving the one, and rejecting the other. *The Words of the Lord* (saith the Psalmist) *are pure Words;* we cannot err in hearing or following them, but we may be misled, without care, in hearkening too much to others; and if God find a Tongue to speak, sure we ought to find Ears to hear, yea, to be ever ready and *swift to hear.*

2. St. James advises us, as to be swift to hear, *so to be slow to speak*; which some, with reference to what went before, understand of not being too forward to speak as Teachers and Instructors of others, without a Call and Commission so to do: and so look upon it as a check to the Presumption of hasty Novices and false Teachers, who take upon them to be publick Teachers, before and without a sufficient Call thereunto. Of whom the Apostle asks the Question, *How shall they preach, except they be sent?* Rom. 10. Others again interpret this being slow to speak, of not being rash or hasty to utter any thing before God; and thereby condemn all *extempore* Effusions in Prayer: according to that of Solomon, *Be not rash with thy Mouth, or hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth, therefore let thy Words be few:* Eccl. 5. 2. And in the foregoing Verse, *to be more ready to hear, than to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, who consider not that they do Evil.* But most understand this Slowness of speaking, of a Wariness and Deliberation in our words, that we be not too talkative, or given to vain babbling; but to consider well what we speak before we utter it, like David, who said, *I will take heed to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue; I will keep my Mouth as it were with a Bridle, whilst the Ungodly is in my sight:* Psal. 39. 1, 2. To this end Naturalists have observ'd, that God hath given us two Ears, but one Tongue; to signify, that we are to hear twice as much as we are to speak: And likewise, that God hath left the Ears open without a Guard, that we might be ever ready to hear; but hath set a double Inclosure upon the Tongue, *viz.* the Teeth and the Lips, to keep it within the Rules of Decency, and to restrain its Extravagance. And that we may be thus swift to hear, and slow to speak, the Apostle directs,

3. To be *slow to Wrath*; for Anger stops the Ears, and lets loose the Tongue, by which means it becomes (as St. James terms it) *a Fire, a World of Iniquity, that defiles the whole Body, and setteth on fire the Course of Nature, and is set on fire of Hell:* James 3. 6. To give place unto Wrath, is, in St. Paul's Phrase, *to give place to the Devil*; Eph. 4. 26, 27. and therefore wills us, not to let the Sun go down upon our Wrath, lest it hinder or disturb us in our Evening-Devotion. To be slow to Wrath, is to imitate our Maker, who is forward to forgive, but backward to take Vengeance; whereas to give way to our unruly Passions,

sions, is to put our selves under the power of Satan, who will render us deaf to Instruction, and run us into all manner of Extravagance both in Words and Actions; for which reason we should be hardly brought to Anger or Impatience, whatever the Wickedness of Men is, or how great soever their Provocations may be.

And that because, as our Apostle adds in the next Verse, *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*; that is, Wrath and Impatience are no way agreeable either with the Temper or the Rules of the Christian Religion, nor do they work any good Effect either upon our selves or others. *Ira furor brevis est*, Anger is a short Frenzy, and makes Men play all the Pranks of Madmen; it obstructs us in our Duty to God and Man, and hinders the doing any thing that is good or acceptable to either: and therefore Solomon tells us, *That Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools, but he that is slow to Wrath is of great Wisdom.*

And because the Word of God is the best Allayer of these Heats and Distempers of the Mind, the Apostle, in the close of this Epistle, exhorts Christians to receive this Word with Meekness, and to lay aside all Pride and Prejudice, and whatever else may hinder the due Operation of it on their Hearts, in the last words; *Wherefore lay apart all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls*: where we are advis'd to lay apart all filthy Lusts and Passions, all Superfluity of Excess and Naughtiness, which, like Excrescences in the Natural Body, draw away the Blood and Spirits from the better Parts, and cause them to pine away and decay. There are evil Humours in the Soul as well as the Body, which if not purg'd away, will occasion great Danger and Damage to both; and therefore the Apostle here speaks of engrafting the good Word of God upon the Stock of our corrupt Nature, that it may yield good Fruit, and produce good Effects within us. By thus removing the Impediments of Vice and Impurity, we shall be the better fitted to receive the pure Word of God with Meekness, and bring forth the Fruits of it with Patience; and then we shall find the Truth of what is here affirm'd in the close, that *'twill be able to save our Souls*. St. Paul affirms the same, that the Holy Scriptures are able to *make us wise unto Salvation*; 1 Tim. 3. 15. meaning, that they shew us the way to eternal Life; and if we follow

the Directions contain'd in them, we shall not miss of the *end of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls.*

This is a brief Summary of this Day's Epistle, which may serve to direct our Practice in the following Particulars.

1st, Since God is the Author and Bestower of every good and perfect Gift, we may learn to whom to give the Thanks and the Glory of them; as also, to whom we are to address for the obtaining of them. The Glory of them is to be ascrib'd, not to any Art or Industry of ours, and much less to any Merits or Worthiness of our own, for we are less than the least of all his Mercies; but intirely to the Bounty and Goodness of God, who gives them where, how, and to whom he pleases. We rob God of his Honour, if we ascribe any thing in the least measure to our selves: for all that we arrogate or assume to our selves, is taken from him to whom all his due; and therefore we are in all cases to say with the Psalmist, *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy Name be all the Praise.*

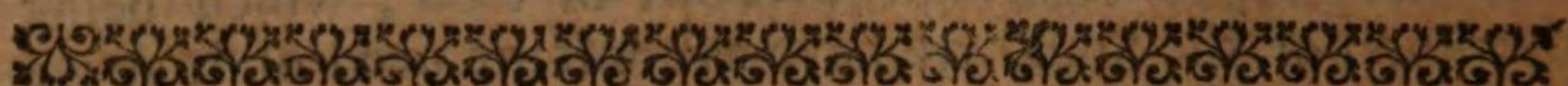
And as we are taught where to give the Glory of them, so are we hereby directed where to seek or go for them; we see they are from above, and come down from the Father of Lights, and therefore we must look up to him from whom they descend, if we mean to have them: *If any of you lack Wisdom,* (saith our Apostle) *let him ask it of God;* he is the Spring and Fountain from whence it flows, and thither must we have recourse for it. And we have encouragement enough so to do, for *he giveth to all Men, and upbraideth not:* beside, this Father of Lights hath no variableness and changeth not, he is constant and faithful that hath promis'd, and never faileth them that seek to him.

2^{dly}, Since we are begotten again by the Word of Truth, as by a new Creation, let us, as we are here exhorted, be swift to hear, and ready to receive this ingrafted Word, that is able to save our Souls. 'Twas a Father's Observation, that God from Heaven began the Law with hearing; saying, *Hear O Israel:* and that God from Heaven so began the Gospel, saying, *This is my beloved Son, hear him.* And as we are to begin, so are we to continue still hearing; so the Apostle interprets that of the Psalmist, *While it is called to-day, hearken to his Voice,* extending it to every Day; for to-morrow, and every Day when it comes, is called to-day, and so reaches to all the Days of our Life. And there is good reason for it, from the continual Necessity

we stand in, of Hearing the Word of God; which being the Food of the Soul, we have as constant need of it as we have of our daily Bread to feed our Bodies: yea, our Saviour calls it the One thing necessary; for when *Martha* was cumber'd about many things, in providing for the Body, *Mary* was said to have chosen the better part, in sitting and hearing his Words; which was the one thing necessary for the Salvation of the Soul, *Luke* 10. 41, 42. Hearing is necessary for the begetting of Faith; *For Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*, *Rom.* 10. 'Tis necessary to the Duty of Prayer; for *how can they call upon him*, (saith the Apostle) *of whom they have not heard?* In short, hearing is necessary to all the Ends of Religion, it directs us in the Paths of Righteousness, and brings us at last to everlasting Life.

Lastly, From what hath been said, we may learn to govern our Words and Passions, that we be not hasty in Speech or Spirit, but slow and deliberate in both. *In the Multitude of words* (saith *Solomon*) *there wanteth not Folly*, and a Fool is known by much speaking. Wisdom is seen in few and well-weigh'd words, and a wise Man is wary and sparing in Speech, especially in loose and bad Company, which the Apostle expresses here by *slow to speak*: and that will help us to govern our Passions; for rash and hasty words oft-times inflame and stir up Anger, but soft and deliberate words help to quench and allay those heats. So that to be *slow to speak*, is a good Way and Means to be *slow to Wrath*. In a word, to conclude, let us all, my Brethren, *be swift to hear*, and ready to receive the Word of God; not like those who will scarce move over their Threshold to hear a Sermon. Let us be *slow to speak*, weighing all our Speeches, that they may administer Grace to the Hearers, and not forward to babble or utter every thing that comes first to head. Let us *be slow to Wrath*, not apt to kindle at every Spark, but imitating our Maker, who is *slow to Wrath*, and ready to shew Mercy. *Amen.*





DISCOURSE LXXV.

The G O S P E L for the Fourth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John xvi. 5——16.

Jesus said unto his Disciples, Now I go my way to him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, Sorrow hath filled your Heart. Nevertheless I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you, that I go away, &c.

OUR Blessed Saviour thought fit to stay awhile upon Earth, after his Resurrection from the Dead, to confirm the Faith of his Disciples, to settle the Christian Church, and to provide for a Succession of Officers in it to the World's end. And when he had taken care about these things, he began to acquaint his Disciples with his Design of leaving them, and going to his Father. And because he knew that his departing from them would be a Matter of great Grief and Trouble to them, he seeks, in the Gospel for this Day, to prepare them for it, and to comfort them under it. To prevent surprize, he lets them know what Troubles and Difficulties they were like to meet with from the World; ver. 2, 3. *They shall put you out of the Synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doth God Service.* And now (saith he) *I go my way to him that sent me.* Having finish'd the Work that was given me to do upon Earth, I am now to return again to my Father in Heaven. And yet (saith he) *none of you asketh me, whither goest thou?* Which words imply not any such Unconcernedness in the Disciples, as if they cared not when, or where he was going; but that they were so overwhelm'd with Sorrow and Sadness, that they were not able to utter their Minds, or to ask any Questions about it: for so the next words of our Saviour intimate; *Because I have said these things unto you, Sorrow*
hath

hath filled your Hearts. Your hearing of my going away, and your fearing what may befall you when I am gone, hath so dismay'd and sunk your Spirits, that you cannot well bear the thoughts of my Departure. And therefore to comfort them, he adds,

In the next Verse, *Nevertheless, I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Nevertheless, that is, notwithstanding all that I have told you of the Malice of the World, and the many and great Troubles you may fear from thence in my Absence; yet for all that, it will be for your good for me to go away: and herein *I tell you the Truth*; using no Guile, Fraud or Flattery in this case, but declaring to you the very truth of this Matter, viz. that 'tis expedient for you that *I go away*. Which is as if he had said, your unwillingness to part with me is indeed a Token of your Love to me, but not to your selves; it proceeds merely from a mistake of your own Benefit and Advantage, for you will be Losers by my Stay, and Gainers by my Departure: *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you*; my continuance with you will deprive you of the comfortable Presence of the Holy Ghost, whose Joys will be your best Support under all the Troubles that may befall you.

But if I depart, I will send him unto you: My going away will occasion the coming of this Comforter, whose joyful Presence will make abundant amends for my Absence; and therefore be not griev'd too much at my leaving of you, which will tend to your greater Comfort: I love you too well to stay to your prejudice, and my withdrawing awhile will be more for your Service, than my constant abiding with you.

But wherein lay the Expedience of Christ's going away? Why, chiefly in these three things:

1st, His going away and ascending up into Heaven, was to be our Harbinger, to prepare a Place for us in those Celestial Mansions. So he expressly told his Disciples, *In my Father's House are many Mansions; I go to prepare a Place for you, and will come again to receive you to my self, that where I am, there may ye be also.* He purchas'd a Place for us whilst he was upon Earth, by the Merit of his Sufferings, and after went to Heaven to take possession of it, and to prepare for our Reception into it: by both these he hath set the Gates of Heaven wide open for us, where an
Entrance

Entrance is administer'd to us abundantly into the Kingdom of God. This is a Matter of so great Importance to us, that 'twas highly expedient for us that he should go away to bring it to pass; and we may well enough bear with his Absence awhile, when he is gone before to so good purpose.

2dly, 'Twas expedient for us that he should go away, that he might be an Advocate and Intercessor for us at God's Right Hand. So the Author to the *Hebrems* tells us, that *Christ, after he had by himself purg'd away our Sins, enter'd into the Holy Place, there to appear in the Presence of God for us*; Heb. 9. 24. Hence St. John declares, *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins*; 1 John 2. 1. This is a Matter of such vast Benefit and Concernment to us, to have such an Advocate ever ready to plead our Cause and to appear in Heaven for us, that we may well bear with his Departure awhile, upon so happy and beneficial an Errand. 'Tis, you know, a very great Privilege, to have a faithful Friend and Favourite in the Court of Princes, to present our Petitions, and procure Audience to them; but how much greater Honour and Favour is it, to have the only-begotten Son of God, yea, one that is himself God blessed for ever, to be our constant Friend and Intercessor in the Court of Heaven? Sure his going thither to this end, must be highly honourable and expedient for us.

3dly, This Expedience will farther appear, because his going away was in order to the Coming of the Comforter: *If I go not away* (saith he) *the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you*. What great need we all stand in of a Comforter under the Troubles of this Life, every one's Experience can easily satisfy him. Christ told his Disciples, that the *World would hate them, because he had chosen them out of the World*: and therefore would not have them *marvel at it; for they hated him, before they hated them*. This Hatred and Malice of theirs will occasion much hard Usage, and expose to many Injuries; and as there was then, so there still is great need of some strong Cordials to support the Spirits under such trials, which Cordials are administer'd only by this Comforter; and it must be mightily for our Interest that this Comforter should come: so that if he will not come without Christ's departing, and will surely come upon it, it must be expedient for us that he go away.

But

Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Easter. 605

But what Necessity was there (may some say) of his going away to this end? If he would stay, we had Consolation enough in his Presence, and could neither desire nor need a better Comforter. Why, there was a Necessity for this, and a great one too; for 'twas the peculiar Office of the Holy Ghost in the Oeconomy of Man's Salvation, to sanctify and comfort the elect People of God; 'twas the Counsel and Contrivance of the whole Trinity, that each Person should have his Part or Office in the Work of Man's Redemption: God the Father was to give his Son; God the Son was to give himself; and God the Holy Ghost was to apply the Virtue of both for the Consolation and Salvation of Mankind. So that this was the proper Part and Office of the Holy Ghost, which Christ would not hinder or invade; he was for our Comfort to confirm and convey to us the Benefits of Christ's Satisfaction: for tho the Purchase of Salvation was made for us by Christ's Death, yet the Seal could not be put to it but by the Holy Spirit, who is therefore said to *seal us up to the Day of Redemption*; Ephes. 4. 30. And as no Writing or Deed of Purchase is of any force, unless it be seal'd, so neither would all that Christ had said or did, avail us any thing if the Holy Ghost had not come to ascertain and apply it to us. So that as Christ is stil'd *the Word*, to direct and assist us; so the Holy Spirit is said to be *the Seal*, to confirm and secure all to us.

Moreover, as without this Seal of the Spirit nothing could be effectually done for us, so without the Aid of his Grace, nothing can be acceptably done by us, no Means of Salvation will be of any Use or Benefit to us without his Blessing and Assistance: 'tis the Spirit's moving upon the Waters of Baptism, that makes them salutary and efficacious to us, and there is no *Laver of Regeneration*, without *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. So in that other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, *the Flesh profiteth nothing, 'tis the Spirit that giveth Life*. 'Tis this that helps all our Infirmities in Prayer, and works all our Works in us and for us; it sanctifies and comforts us in all our Distresses, and without his inward Joys and Consolation, we should sink under the Burden of them. Necessary then it was that this Comforter should come.

But what Necessity was there (may another say) of his going away? Why must Christ go, before the Comforter will come? Could they not both stay together? and that
would

would make the Consolation the greater. Why! there was a Necessity for this too, for Christ had promis'd to send the Holy Ghost to supply his Absence, which could not be except he had gone away; for the sending another, supposes the Absence of him that sendeth, as well as the Presence of the Party sent. Beside, the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, was to be sent by both, and therefore 'twas expedient for him to go to his Father to that end.

Moreover, Christ's going away was necessary in respect of the Holy Ghost, whose Godhead would not have been so clearly manifested, if Christ had continu'd; for all the Miracles done by the Spirit of God, might have been ascrib'd to the Son, if he had not withdrawn, and so the Holy Ghost might not have had that due Honour and Estimation that belong'd to him.

But there was yet a farther Expedience in Christ's going away, in respect of the Disciples themselves; and that was, to wean them from his bodily Presence, of which they began to grow too fond; and to make them more sensible of the Benefit of his spiritual Presence, which was much better for them: for his bodily Presence was confin'd to place, and so few could have the Benefit or Comfort of it, but his spiritual Presence was every where, and so had a more diffusive and cherishing Influence. And therefore as a Mother sometimes withdraws her self from her Child, whom she dearly loves, merely to take it off from a too great Fondness of her; so our Blessed Saviour often talk'd to his Disciples of his going away, and after withdrew his Person from them, to wean them from their too great Love of his bodily Presence, that they might receive the comfortable Instructions and Joys of the Holy Ghost, which would be of more advantage to them, than his corporal Presence.

Thus we see the Expedience of Christ's going away, in order to his sending the Comforter to us. But what was this Comforter to do when he came? What he was to do with respect to us, we have in some measure seen; namely, to assist, sanctify, and comfort us. What he was to do in respect of the World, the next Verses of this Gospel will inform us; where we read, *And when he is come he shall reprove the World of Sin, and of Righteousness, and of Judgment.* Where our Saviour alludes to the three sorts of Causes or Actions amongst the *Jews*, that were usually pleaded in

in their Courts. And they were first criminal Causes, express'd here by the Name of *Sin*: Secondly, Actions about Right or Wrong, express'd here by *Righteousness*: and thirdly, Actions about the Reward or Punishments of both, express'd here by *Judgment*. Accordingly Christ here told them, that the Holy Ghost at his coming would plead his cause against the World, and lay against it those three sorts of Actions; reproving it first of *Sin* (saith he) *because they believe not on me*. And there charging them with the Guilt of Infidelity. Secondly, of *Righteousness* (saith he) *because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more*: meaning, that he would vindicate his Innocence by his Ascension into Heaven, where he should be above the reach of their Malice, and they depriv'd of any farther sight of him. Thirdly, Of *Judgment*, *because the Prince of this World is judged*: that is, he shall urge and execute Vengeance upon Satan and all his Instruments for their Cruelty in crucifying of him, and shall pronounce Sentence of eternal Death and Destruction upon them. To which our Saviour adds, in the next Verse, *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*: meaning, that he had more Matters to reveal to them from his Father, relating to the Christian Law; but you are many of you so wedded to the *Jewish* Ordinances and Traditions, in which you have been educated, that you cannot receive them yet, nor be patient under them. *Howbeit* (saith he) *when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all Truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he shall shew you things to come*. Where we have,

1st, The Coming of the Holy Ghost suppos'd or taken for granted; *When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come*. This is grounded upon Christ's Promise after his Departure to send him; *If I go away* (saith he) *I will send him unto you*: and he is call'd here, *the Spirit of Truth*, in opposition to those lying Spirits, that are gone abroad into the World. And likewise because he is said,

2^{dly}, To guide them into all Truth. His Office is to enlighten our Mind, and to impart to us the whole Will of God; and therefore our Saviour told his Disciples, that tho there were some things concerning Christianity, which by reason of the Weakness of their Faith, and the Grossness of their Understanding, they could not bear at present, being not yet fully wean'd from the Ceremonies of
Moses's

Moses's Law, yet this Spirit of Truth at his coming will shew you the Full of his Father's Mind in those Matters, and deliver you from the Mistakes and Prejudices you yet labour under concerning those legal Observances.

And what he shall say, shall be no private Doctrine of his own; *for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear of the Father or me, that shall he speak.* He shall inculcate upon you, what I have already taught you, and likewise bring to your remembrance what you have forgotten of what I have said unto you. Neither will he shew you only things past or present, but also future things; *He will shew you things to come:* which may relate either to some great Truths, not then fully known, as the calling in of the *Gentiles*, and the like; or else to some clearer Revelations of a future Life, than were at that time discover'd.

Moreover, Christ tells them, that one great End of the Coming of this Holy Spirit, was to publish and promote his Glory, *He shall glorify me:* that is to say, all that I have done and suffer'd for the Good of my Church, shall then have their glorious Effect, and obtain their End; for the Holy Ghost shall apply to them my Righteousness, and the Merits of my Death, communicating to them a new and spiritual Life; and thereby shall at once set forth my Glory, and set forward the Salvation of Men. And this he shall do by the Help and Instructions of my Doctrine; *For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you:* that is, he shall have his Message from me, and shall reveal nothing unto you, but what he hath receiv'd from me.

Not that I exclude my Father (saith he) by appropriating these things to my self; for *all things that the Father hath, are mine*, i.e. All things are common between us: *I and my Father are one*, his Will and mine are the same: and as my Work is to do the Will of my Father, so I therein do my own, our Wills exactly accord together; *Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* Whatsoever the Father shall reveal unto you, is the same, or agreeable to my Doctrine; and his revealing it is a taking of mine, and declaring unto you.

This is the full and entire Sense of the whole Gospel for this Day; from which we may learn many good Lessons: As,

i. From

1. From Christ's acquainting his Disciples with, and preparing them for his Departure, we learn the tender Love and Affection he bears towards his People. He knew they would be troubled at his going from them, and accordingly found it so upon the first motion or mentioning of it; and therefore prepar'd for them the strongest Cordials and Consolations to support their Spirits. He shew'd his Goodwill towards them, by promising another and a better Comforter to supply his Place, and declar'd his Unwillingness to leave them, if their own Happiness and Salvation did not require it. Whereby he seem'd to deal with them, as a tender Mother doth with her dear Child; she knows it necessary to wean it, and yet is loth to withdraw from it, and can hardly suffer it out of her sight. Christ must go, but his Bowels yearn'd upon those he left behind; which may abundantly satisfy us of his tender Love and dear Affection towards us.

2. From the Disciples being troubled at the News of Christ's going away, we learn that Men may and many times are grieved at that which is for their Good, and desire that which tends to their Prejudice. This was the Case of the Disciples here, they were all against Christ's going away, which was mightily for their Advantage; and they were all for his Stay, which would have prov'd a great Disadvantage to them: for the former brought, the latter would have hinder'd the Coming of the Comforter. And therefore a Reverend Father on this Place brings in Christ saying to his Disciples, "Your Hearts are filled with Sorrow, because your Heads are filled with Error. You take my Stay to be beneficial to you, but this is a Mistake in you, for 'twill prove a Hindrance to you, and turn to your greater Loss." And 'tis too common for Men to err, as in this, so in many other Points: for Men are wont to court Prosperity as their great Happiness, and to dread Adversity as their great Misfortune, when the former is many times full of Danger, and the latter of much more Use and Benefit to them: which should teach us to be not only content, but thankful under all the Dispensations of Divine Providence.

3. If it be thus expedient for us (as we have seen) that Christ should go away, then let us learn, to bear patiently awhile the Absence of our Lord: He is gone before as our Harbinger, to prepare a place for us in his heavenly Kingdom; he is ascended up to be our Advocate, to inter-

cede with the Father in our behalf, and to plead our Cause for us; and he will shortly come again, and take us to himself. In the mean time he hath taken great Care of us, by sending to us his Holy Spirit, to direct and comfort us in all Conditions, to guide us by his Counsel here, and at last to bring us to Glory. Let us therefore thankfully own these his inestimable Favours, and rejoice in his spiritual, tho' we are depriv'd awhile of his corporal Presence. He promis'd not to *leave us comfortless, but that he would come again to us*: the former he hath made good already, by giving us his Holy Spirit to comfort us, as we shall see hereafter. And therefore,

Lastly, Let us wait with Patience, and prepare our selves for the latter; for *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*; Heb. 10. 37. The Bridegroom of our Souls is hastening to us; let us therefore with the wise Virgins get Oil in our Lamps, or Grace in our Hearts, that we may be prepar'd to meet him, and be welcom'd by him at his Coming. The foolish Virgins that had neglected this Preparation, were excluded from the Marriage; and none but they who had made themselves ready, were admitted to the Bridegroom's Presence. Let us then have on our Wedding-Garment, and adorn our Souls with the Graces of the Holy Spirit; and then we may join with the Souls under the Altar, in saying, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.*



DISCOURSE LXXVI.

The EPISTLE for the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

St. James i. 22, to the end.

Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves: For if any be a Hearer of the Word, and not a Doer, he is like unto a Man, beholding his natural Face in a Glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of Man he was, &c.

THE Collect for the Day prays to God, from whom all good things come, to grant, that by his holy Inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding may perform the same.

The Epistle for the Day immediately follows that for the last Sunday, and begins where that ended. In the beginning of that, St. James told us, that every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights: of which we are here minded again in the Prayer for this Day, that from him all good things do come. In the Close of that Epistle we were exhorted to be swift to hear, and to receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, that is able to save our Souls. The next words, which begin this Day's Epistle, shew how the Word may become effectual to that end; and that is, by being Doers of the Word, not Hearers only: for tho. hearing the Word may inspire the Mind with good Thoughts, yet 'tis the doing or performing of it that can alone bring them to good effect; which is the thing we are taught to pray and endeavour for this Day. Hearers then we must be, as we saw before, but not Hearers only, but we must be Doers also; neither of them is to be excluded. We may not think, that the adding of doing hath excus'd us from the Duty of hearing; or that St. James, by opening the Hand for the one, hath shut the Ear from the other: neither can doing

go unaccompany'd with hearing; for we must first hear what we are to do, before we can do it. Neither alone is sufficient, and therefore both must go together. And here a double Error may be easily detected in this matter:

The first is, Of those who place all their Religion in Hearing.

The second, Of those who would make Doing an Excuse from all Hearing.

For the first, there were some in the Apostles days, and there are still too many in ours, who place all their Religion in Hearing; and think, if they come to Church, and hear a Sermon, all is well, tho they never mind or observe it after. We read of some, who *heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears*; who will go many a mile to hear a Sermon, when they may hear a better at home in their own Parish. These have heaps of Teachers, and heaps of Sermons, one justling out another, without making any good use of either. Nothing, they think, can be well done without a Sermon; no Prayers, no Thanksgivings, no Sacrament can avail any thing without it. They take the hearing of the Sermon to be the main, if not the whole of their Religion; and without it, scarce think Divine Service worth their Attendance. These (as one hath observ'd) have only the Ear-mark of Christ's Sheep, without any thing of the Meekness, Innocence, or Humility that belongs to them. They hang up the Word as a Jewel in their Ear, merely for show, without any farther use of it. Of these we may ask the Apostle's Question, If the whole Body were an Ear, where were the Seeing? If all Religion consist in hearing, what will become of *obeying, which is better than Sacrifice*? or receiving the Sacrament, which is the seeing and tasting of our Saviour? To be Hearers indeed of God's Word, is a good part of Religion, and a necessary means of Salvation; but yet 'tis but a Part, and not the Whole of either. We must not rest in it, or rely upon it; for when the hearing is over, something else is to be done: we are to be *Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only*. Again,

Secondly, There are others that set up a Pretence of Doing, to excuse them from all Hearing. They tell us, that they serve God in their Hearts, and do to all Men as they would be done by; and this, they say, is the Sum of all Religion, which they make it their care to observe and practise; and so think it needless to go and hear Religion

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run out into Enthusiasm, and spun into Niceties, Contentions, and trifling Observations: and upon this pretence cast off all Hearing. The former was the Plea of Sectaries, and this of Atheists and loose Persons; and both miscarry or split upon two dangerous Rocks: For to set up Hearing against Doing, is Hypocrisy; and to pretend Doing without Hearing, is Profaneness and Partiality. Now to prevent both these Errors or Mistakes, God hath join'd Hearing and Doing together; and those whom God hath join'd together, let no Man put asunder.

Yea, wherever we find Hearing commended, or hath any Blessing annex'd to it in Scripture, it never goes alone, but hath always Doing added to it. The *Israelites* were commended for saying unto *Moses*, *Go near and bring thou God's Word unto us, and we will hear it, and do it*; Deut. 5. 28. Our Saviour compares him that heareth his Sayings and doth them, to a wise Builder, that builds his House upon a Rock, where it can bear the shock of the greatest Tempest: but to build upon Hearing only, is to build upon the Sand, where 'tis shaken and beaten down with every Wind; Mat. 7. 24. Again, *Luke* 11. 28. he pronounces those blessed that hear the Word of God, and keep it. And elsewhere, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. Where Hearing and Doing are always put together, as *St. James* does here, *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only*.

But what is it to be *Doers of the Word*? Why, not barely to commend a Sermon, saying with them in the Gospel, *Master, thou hast well said*, *Luke* 20. 29. For tho' this be better than censuring or carping at it, yet this at best is but saying, not doing. Nor yet,

2dly, Is it only to be mov'd and affected with a Discourse; for *Herod* heard *John Baptist* gladly, and *Felix* trembled at *St. Paul's* Discourse of *Justice, Temperance, and Judgment to come*; and yet neither of them were *Doers of the Word*: This is rather suffering under it, than doing of it. No, nor yet,

3dly, Is the repeating of Sermons, or conferring about them, the doing of them; for if it go no farther, this is still but talking, not doing of them.

Doing then implies in it somewhat more than all this; and that is, to obey from the Heart the Form of Doctrine deliver'd to us, to put in practice what we hear, and to lead our Lives accordingly. 'Tis to be encourag'd by the Promises, to be aw'd by the Threats, and to be directed by

the Precepts of the Gospel. 'Tis so to receive the spiritual Seed of God's Word into our Hearts, that it may bring forth Fruit in our Lives, and appear in the Acts of Holiness and a good Conversation. To which end, the Word must be ingrafted into us, as the Apostle expresses it, that it may fructify in us, and make us fruitful in every good Word and Work; and then it will be able to save our Souls. For Religion is not a speculative, but practical Science; and our hearing of it, is not so much intended to fill our Heads with Knowledg, as our Hearts with Grace, and to conform our Lives to the Rules and Precepts of it. The preaching of the Word is design'd to direct us in our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and our selves; which we are to hearken to, not as matters of course, or idle Tales, that may go in at one Ear, and out at the other; but with a due Sense of the Weight and Importance, and the Necessity of ordering our selves and Actions by them. In short, to be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, is to reduce what we hear into practice, to be as willing to follow wholesom Advice for the Good of our Souls, as we are for the Welfare of our Bodies; and to be as much or more concern'd about the Affairs of the next Life, as Men are wont to be about the lesser Matters of this. Without which, we do but mock God and deceive our selves: for so the next words tells us, *Be Doers, not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves*; implying, that to rest in Hearing only without Doing, is but to deceive our selves. Of all things in the world, Men hate to be deceiv'd; looking upon it as a Reproach to their Persons, and a Reflection upon their Understanding. To be deceiv'd by a Friend, whom they trusted, and with whom they they took sweet counsel together, adds a farther Sting and Edge to the Deceit; but for a Man to deceive himself, that is the worst of all Deceits, for he is both the Deceiver and the Deceived too. He that is deceiv'd by another, finds pity, and the Deceiver blame; but he that deceives himself, is seldom or never pity'd, but bears the blame, and inherits the Fruits of his own Folly. And this is the Case of all that are Hearers of God's Word, and not Doers; they deceive themselves, and wrong their own Souls.

But wherein lies this Deceit? Why, partly in the Way, and partly in the End of Hearing. That in the Way, is by ascribing more to Hearing than is promis'd or belongs to it; that in the End, is by propounding false or wrong Ends in performing the Duty. Both these ways too many

err and deceive themselves in Hearing, and so deprive themselves of all the Benefit and Reward of the Duty.

For the 1st, God hath join'd Hearing and Doing together, and made many Promises of Life and Salvation to the joint Performance of them: as, *Hear, and your Souls shall live*; and, *He that heareth my Sayings and doth them, shall be blessed in his Deed*. Now to expect that from one alone, that is promis'd to both together, is to put a Fallacy upon a Man's self. The Schoolmen have observ'd a double Fallacy in it, the one *a sensu composito ad divisum*, by taking that singly, which is to be understood jointly; and so making a Part equal with the Whole: the other is, *a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter*, that is, by taking that absolutely, which is spoken conditionally, and in a qualify'd sense; and so ascribing that simply to Hearing, which is promis'd to it only as 'tis qualify'd and join'd with Doing; and both ways they put a Fallacy or Cheat upon themselves: As they do,

2^{dly}, By propounding wrong Ends to themselves in Hearing. For some come to Church only out of custom, and for fashion's sake; others to make a shew of some Religion, and to maintain a Credit and Reputation that way; others come more to see and meet their Neighbours, and to talk of their worldly Affairs, than to hear from God, or to mind the business of their Souls. Others again come not so much to learn, or edify in Grace and Knowledg, which are the true Ends of Hearing, as to please themselves with the Sound and Rhetorick of the Sermon; or, which is worse, to censure and carp at it: and instead of applying to themselves what mostly concerns them, and amending by it, only sneer and snarl at it, like Swine trampling upon Pearls, and with the Cock in the Fable preferring a Barley-Corn before a Jewel. All these being Hearers only, and not Doers of the Word, do but deceive themselves to their own destruction.

Such as these are in the next words compar'd to a *Man beholding his natural Face in a Glass, and having there beheld himself, goeth his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of Man he was*. Where the Word of God is liken'd to a Mirrour or Looking-Glass, which reflects a Man's Image or Pourtraiture to him, shewing what kind of Person he is. The hearing of the Word is as it were the looking into this Glass, to behold the Spots or Blemishes of the Face, or whatever else is amiss in him, to the end that he may

amend and set all things right by it. But the way of too many is to look on, and to look off presently, and so forget what manner of Men they were; forbearing to reform or rectify any thing that was out of order. Such, St. James tells us, are the Hearers of the Word without doing it; they have a transient View and Sight of themselves, and behold as in a Glass the Faults and Errors of their ways, but quickly go their way, and forget to amend any thing that is amiss: yea, some are drawn from hence to cast off all Attendance upon the Word, that they may not hear their Faults, or learn their Duty. And as *Lais*, the *Corinthian* Harlot, broke her Looking-Glass, because it shew'd her the Wrinkles and Deformity of her Face; so these lay aside their Bibles for the same reason, and come not to the Light of God's Word, lest their Deeds should be reprov'd.

Whereas he that is not a Hearer only, but a Doer of the Word, is compar'd to one *that looketh into the perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein; who being not a forgetful Hearer, but Doer of the Work, shall be blessed in his Deed*: that is, he that so looketh into the Glass of the Gospel, as to dress himself thereby, to wipe off his Spots, and to adorn himself and his Conversation; will appear fair and beautiful in the eyes of God and Men, and shall be blessed in his Deed. He shall be blessed with the Knowledg of Divine Truths; for *he that doth the Will of my Father, he shall know the Truth whether it be of God*: John 7. He shall be blessed with Grace here, to help in time of need, and in the end be crown'd with everlasting Glory.

Thus we see the Happiness of those who join Hearing and Doing together, and the Misery of those that separate or put them asunder.

Now the Word of God, which we are here taught to hear and do, directs us chiefly in the well-governing of our Words and Works; in the regulating and well-ordering whereof, a great part of our Religion consists.

As for our Words, the next Verse tells us, that *if any Men among you seem to be religious, and bridletb not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart; that Man's Religion is vain*. Where the Apostle supposes,

1st, That a Man may seem to be Religious, and not be truly and really so; for many may come and hear the Word of God, and sit before him as his People, willing to know and do his Will, and yet after neither remember

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nor observe any thing of it. Of these we find God himself complaining, that they *draw nigh to him with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from him*. St. Paul tells us, that in the latter days, into which we are fallen, Men would *have a Form of Godliness, and yet deny the Power thereof*; from whom he wills us to turn away as Hypocrites and Pretenders, that have only the Shew of Religion, without the Substance and Reality of it.

2dly, The Apostle here adds, that an unbridled Tongue is a sign of such false and hypocritical Religion; for he that seems to be religious, and bridled not his Tongue, his Religion is all but vain. The Psalmist speaks of some, who boast that their *Tongues are their own, who is Lord over them?* and so let them loose to all scurrilous, backbiting, and detracting Language; by which they pervert the End of Speech, and abuse it to the dishonour of God and our Neighbour. Now true Religion puts a Bridle upon this unruly Member, that keeps it from running into such Extravagancies, and confines it to the Rules of Decency and Discretion. Indeed such as are Hearers only, are too apt to use their Tongues to such evil purposes, as we may see in Sectaries and Hypocrites, who use their Tongues more to the censuring and reviling of others, than to the reforming or amending of themselves: but the Doers of the Word are taught carefully to avoid these things; and such, with *David*, keep their Mouths as it were with a Bridle, to restrain their Exorbitance, and diligently take heed to their ways, that they offend not with their Tongue. They that do otherwise, do but flatter themselves with vain Hopes, if they think their Religion will stand them in any stead. For the Apostle here tells them, they do *but deceive their own Hearts with a vain Religion*, and others with vain Pretences. I know, many that are great Frequenters of Sermons and Lectures, and so much for hearing, will think it strange to be thought Deceivers of their own Hearts; and will take it ill, that such knowing Men as they should be reckon'd among the Fools that put a cheat upon themselves. We find the *Pharisees* did so, who thought none like them for Knowledg and Holiness; and yet our Saviour, because *they said and did not*, often calls them *Fools and blind*. And if they thought their empty Show of Holiness would bring them to Heaven, they deceiv'd themselves; for Publicans and Sinners, that made no such Shows, should enter there before them. St. Paul speaks of some that *were always learning,*

learning, but never came to the knowledg of the Truth: they were much for hearing and talking, but little for doing; and so never attain'd to any true Knowledg, which consists in Practice, but only to a jangling sort of Knowledg, that consists in striving about Words, or Opposition of Science falsely so call'd. And so resting in Words without Deeds, as too many still do, they deceive themselves, and their Religion is vain; for that is design'd not only to regulate our Words, but to promote good Works.

So the last Words of this Day's Epistle declare: *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World:* that is, the Religion that consists in doing as well as hearing, rests not in an outward Profession only, but is evermore accompany'd with the Practice of good Works; such as Charity to the Needy and Distressed, express'd here by *visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction*; and Purity of Life and Conversation, express'd by *keeping our selves unspotted from the World*. This St. James here calls *pure and undefiled Religion before God and the Father*; because they who do these things will be found without spot or blame before God our heavenly Father. The Works of Charity are express'd here by *visiting the Fatherless and Widows*, who being bereav'd of those Relations that should support them, are left in a helpless Condition, and so cast by Providence upon the Care and Charity of others to assist them: The doing whereof, is a good Work of Charity, that is agreeable to true Religion, and will be attended with a good Reward; but the Neglect of it is an Argument of great Uncharitableness, that is contrary to Religion, and will in the end meet with a suitable Punishment.

Purity of Life is here express'd by *keeping our selves unspotted from the World*: that is, by abstaining from all filthy Lusts, which defile both Body and Soul, and avoiding all the evil Examples and Temptations of the World, which leave a stain or spot upon the Reputation of all that follow them.

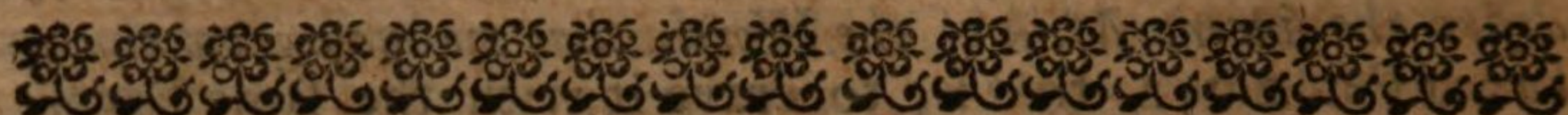
From this Day's Epistle so unfolded, we learn,

1. The great Duty of hearing of God's Word; that we be not slack, but swift to hear it, longing for it as for our appointed Food, and labouring to digest it by Prayer and Meditation, that it may turn to the Nourishment and Comfort

fort of our Souls. St. Peter wills us as new-born Babes to desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby; 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. that is, to crave it with the same Eager-ness of Appetite, and likewise with the same Simplicity and Freedom from Prejudice, as a sucking Child does the Mother's Breast. St. Paul exhorts, that the Word of God may dwell in us richly in all Wisdom; and to that end to give attendance and attention to it, not forsaking the assembling our selves for that purpose, but rather saying with Samuel, *Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth.* But yet,

2. Let us not rest contented with the bare hearing, or think our Work is over when the Sermon is ended; for our Work then begins: which is, to set our selves to the practice of what we have heard, that our profiting may appear unto God, and to all Men. Let us not deceive our selves with an empty Sound of Religion in the Ear, or think that God will be mock'd with such vain and superficial Services; but let the Word sink from the Ear into the Heart, and from thence appear in our Lives and Conversations, that we may reap the fruit and benefit of it: otherwise all our Hearing will but inflame our Reckoning, and increase our Condemnation; for he that knoweth his Master's Will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes. I shall conclude with the words of our Saviour, *If you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*





DISCOURSE LXXVII.

The G O S P E L for the Fifth Sunday after *Easter*.

St. John xvi. 23, to the end.

Verily, Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name: Ask and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full. These things have I spoken to you in Proverbs, &c.

IN the foregoing part of this Chapter, our Saviour had been discoursing his Disciples concerning his leaving of the World, and ascending up into Heaven, to prepare them for it, and to support them under it.

In the Gospel for this Day, which closes the Chapter, he adds some farther Directions about praying to him when he was gone, and Patience under any Sufferings that might befall them for his sake.

The Gospel begins with an Encouragement to Prayer, from an Assurance of an Answer and Success in it. *Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* The Terms *verily, verily I say unto you*, denote not only the great Weight and Consequence, but the undoubted Truth and Certainty of what comes after it; as may be seen in sundry Places of Scripture, where this Asseveration is us'd.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, that is agreeable to his Will, and suitable to your Wants and Necessities, *he will give unto you*; if not presently, yet in due time; and if not in the same kind, yet in something better and more convenient for you. Only the Manner and Circumstance of asking must be *in my Name*; that is, for my sake, for my Merits, and in virtue of my Atonement, which was not compleated till my Death, when the Debt for your Sins was fully paid, and the Satisfaction to Divine Justice own'd and accepted by my Resurrection for our Justification: which

which made him say, *Hitherto have ye ask'd nothing in my Name*; nor could they well do it till his Ascension into Heaven, when, as the *High-Priest enter'd into the Holy of Holies with the Blood of the Atonement*, there to plead it in the behalf of the People; so *Christ enter'd into the highest Heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us*. So that this asking in Christ's Name was a new Form of Prayer, that was not used before, and commenc'd not till his ascending up into Heaven: after which, he bid them *ask and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full*; meaning, that their Requests should be granted, for the supply of all their Wants, and the fulfilling of all their Joys. And hence all our Prayers ever since have been and still are offer'd up in Christ's Name, and through his Merits and Mediation for us. *These things* (saith he) *have I spoken unto you in Proverbs*; being deliver'd to you in mystical and mysterious Sayings and Parables, which have something of Darkness in them, on purpose to put you upon the greater Search and Inquiry into them. *But the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in Proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father*: that is, the time draws near when the Holy Ghost shall come down upon you, and then he will set all these things more plainly before you, according to the Pleasure and Promise of the Father, who hath thus order'd matters in his Church. For *when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all Truth, and shew you things to come*; ver. 13. He shall give you a clearer Light, and more lively Apprehensions of these divine and heavenly Matters.

In that Day (saith he) *ye shall ask in my Name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God*: that is, from the Day of Christ's Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, they were to put up all their Petitions in Christ's Name. And this Benefit (saith he) you receive by these things, that you shall not need my offering up your Prayers for you; but you may, in my name, offer them up your selves unto God, who himself loveth you, and will accept and answer what you ask of him; and that because of your Love to me, and your Faith in me, that I was sent by him to this end.

God the Father cannot chuse but love those that love his Son, there is that mutual Kindness and Sympathy between them, that extends as far as each other's Affections reach.

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The Love of Parents (you know) descends to their Children; and the Love of Friends enlarges it self to their Relations and Allies: and God Almighty will not fail to take those within the Compass of his Care and Affections, that love his only begotten and dearly beloved Son. Love (we say) is the Loadstone of Love, it hath a secret and magnetick force to attract and draw the Affections, and 'tis almost unnatural not to love those that love us. Besides, Likeness is a known Cause of Love; and there is that exact Similitude and Harmony between the Father and the Son, that the Love of the one draws the Love of the other, and strongly engages the Affections of both.

Now God's loving of us, is here grounded upon our Love and Faith in his Son, by believing him to be the Messias, and that he came out from God; and that he did so, Christ declares in the next words, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World*, and both by his Order and Appointment: so that the receiving of me, is the receiving of him; and he that rejects the Son, rejects the Father also. *Again, I leave the World* (saith he) *and go to the Father*, being altogether at his Disposal, for the carrying on and compleating the Work of Man's Redemption. He that firmly believes and relies upon this, will be lov'd of the Father, who will hear his Prayers, and answer the Petitions put up to him in his Son's Name. By which we see, that the way to gain the Love of God is to believe in Christ, to take him for the Saviour of the World, and to depend upon his Merits for all our Happiness and Salvation.

Upon the hearing of this Discourse, the Disciples said unto him, *Lo! now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no Proverb*; ver. 29. This is plain Doctrine, and easy to be understood and receiv'd by us: He had before spoken to them in Parables and dark Sayings, that wanted a Key to unfold them; he had wrapt up the knowledg of Divine Truths in Mysteries and Proverbs, that were hard to be understood: but here he spake more intelligibly, and open'd his Mind more clearly and fully to them.

Christ was wont to teach his Followers slowly, as they were able to bear it, and to instil Knowledg by Degrees, as they were able to receive it, which is the best Way and Method of Instruction. He that would infuse Liquor into a narrow-mouth'd Vessel, must do it gently, and by degrees, and not pour in all at once; for then it will run by,
and

and instead of filling the Bottle, will spill the Liquor, and leave it empty. In like manner, he that will infuse Knowledge into narrow and shallow Understandings, must not give them too much together, for then they will learn nothing; but by little and little they may get something, and by easy Steps come to the knowledge of the Truth. This was the Course that Christ took with his Disciples; he instructed them by degrees, and from lower put them into higher Forms; he taught them by Parables to exercise their Understandings, and when they could not find the Drift or Meaning of them, he unfolded them unto them. He often told them, that he had many things to impart to them, but they could not bear them yet; and 'tis not for you to know the Times, and the Seasons, and the like. But here, a little before his Ascension, he discover'd things more freely and fully to them, and without Parables and Proverbs plainly reveal'd Matters to them; which made them say, *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any Man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God:* ver. 30. Now we are convinc'd of thy Omniscience, that thou hast a perfect Knowledge of all Divine Truths, by thy revealing of them so evidently unto us of thine own accord. 'Tis probable that Christ prevented them in some Questions they were about to put to him, by an Answer already given in his discoursing with them; and this might occasion their Saying, *Thou needest not that any Man should ask thee.* From whence they proceeded to declare their Faith in him, that they were now fully satisfy'd that he was sent from God, and that he came into the World on purpose to reveal his Father's Will. By which we see that the Excellence of Christ's Doctrine, as well as the Greatness of his Miracles, was a convincing Proof and Demonstration of his Messiahship; for the Disciples here were fully convinc'd by it, and declar'd their Resolution of standing firm and stedfast to their Faith in him.

Our Saviour perceiving their Confidence, said unto them, *Do ye now believe? Do you already presume upon the Strength and Constancy of your Faith in me? Alas! your Faith is not so strong or firm as you take it to be; you speak very confidently of your Belief in me now, whilst Danger seems to be at a distance from you; but you will find it otherwise, when Trouble and Tribulation draws nearer to you: And to tell you the truth, you will*
be

be shortly put to the Trial of it, and such a shock is hard at hand which you will not be able to bear : *For behold the Hour cometh* (saith he) *yea is now come, that ye shall be scatter'd every Man to his own Home, and shall leave me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me :* that is, the Time is drawing nigh, when you will all fly and forsake me, and go every one to his own Home : for as when the Shepherd is smitten, the Sheep are scatter'd, and go every one their own way ; so when Trouble and Anguish cometh upon me, you will all forsake me, and shift for your selves, and leave me alone. And so it prov'd ; for at his Passion they all fled from him, and left him to himself. St. Peter deny'd him with bitter Oaths and Exclamations, and none staid by him at his Cross save *John* the beloved Disciple ; and yet (saith he) I am not left altogether destitute, for God is with me to assert the Justice and Innocence of my Cause. Now this may teach us,

1st, Never to presume too much upon our own Strength, or to raise our Confidence too high upon the Firmness of our Faith : for we see St. Peter's Faith, tho built, as he thought, upon a Rock, yet fail'd him ; and David's Confidence, which in his Prosperity he took to be as firm and immovable as a Mountain, was yet shaken by a little Adversity. And if those great Champions and Pillars of the Church were thus shaken, we may very well learn that Lesson of the Apostle, *Be not high-minded, but fear.*

2^{ly}, We learn hence to pray to God, and rely upon the Comforts of his Presence, who will stand by us, when all others forsake us. Christ found himself not alone, when his Disciples were gone, because his Father was with him ; and Christians will never want the Presence and Assistance of both, if they stick to him ; for he is a constant Friend, and hath promis'd never to leave us nor forsake us. *These things* (saith our Saviour in the close of the Chapter) *I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have Peace ; in the World ye shall have Tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the World.* In which words he forewarn'd them of the Difficulties they might meet with in his Absence, to prevent Surprize, and forearm them against them, by a Promise of Peace, and all needful Blessings.

Now this being the great End and Use of this Discourse of our Saviour to his Disciples, a little before he ascended up into Heaven, 'twill be requisite a little to improve and inlarge upon it. And here we may observe,

1. His telling them what they were to expect when he was gone; *In the World ye shall have Tribulation.*

2. His administering Comfort and Cordials to them to support them under it; *But be of good cheer.*

3. The Ground and Reason of his Consolation; *For I have overcome the World.* Of each a word or two. And,

1. Of the hard Usage they were to expect when he was gone from them; *In the World ye shall have Tribulation.* This Christ himself met with in it, and *the Disciple is not above his Lord*; we must go by the Cross, as he did, to the Crown, and *thro many Tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God.* This the Apostles and Primitive Christians likewise found, who drank deep of this bitter Cup; and *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer Persecution.* The Envy and Malice of the World will fasten on those that live above it, and belong not to it: *The World* (saith our Saviour) *will love its own*; but *because I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you*: but *marvel not* (as he adds) *if the World hate you, for it hated me before it hated you*; and perhaps hates you the more for my sake, who have taught you to renounce and despise it. *The World will love its own*; that is, those that admire and set their Hearts upon it: but it tramples upon those that are dead to it, and aspire after nobler Objects. Daily Experience shews what Sufferings and Troubles good Men are expos'd to in the World, what Violence is offer'd to their Persons, what Spoil is made of their Goods, what Reproach and Infamy is cast upon their Name; in a word, what Injuries and Indignities of all kinds they undergo at the hands of the Wicked. This hath been the Lot of all our Forerunners in the Faith, and is still the Portion of the best of Men, who are malign'd, hated, and persecuted by the World. *Many are the Troubles of the Righteous* (saith holy David) *but the Lord delivereth them out of all*; Psal. 34. 19. And this will lead me,

2. To the Comforts and Cordials administred by our Saviour under these Tribulations, in these words, *But be of good cheer*; that is, be not dismay'd at any Trouble that may befall you here, they are but short Trials of your Faith and Patience, which are intended only for your Good; and if you bear them manfully, will in the end add a brighter Lustre to your Crown of Glory. Christ pronounces those Blessed that suffer for *Righteousness sake*, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And again, *Happy are*

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ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all manner of Evil of you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you: Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. St. Paul stirs up the Philippians, to rejoice in the Lord always, even when they were under a heavy Persecution; and lest they should think that an improper time for Joy, he doubles the Exhortation, *And again, I say, rejoice*; Phil. 4. 1. St. James bids us, *to count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations*; Jam. 1. 2. Look upon it as the joyfullest thing that can happen unto you, to be exercis'd with Afflictions, for thereby you are made conformable unto Christ, and by suffering with him awhile, shall e'er long be glorify'd together. This is a Cordial strong enough to bear us up under the greatest Sufferings; and instead of fainting, will help us *to rejoice in Tribulation*: and this is what our Saviour means, in bidding us here, *to be of good chear*.

Not that we are to be altogether insensible of Pain, and to have no Feeling at all of the Uneasiness of any Misery or Torment; for that neither does Nature allow, or Religion require. Our Saviour himself felt the Bitterness of his Cup, and groan'd in the Pangs and Agonies of his Passion; and no Affliction for the present can be joyous, but grievous. The Rants of the Stoicks, concerning the Pleasure of Pain, the Sweetness of a Rack, and the Delight of Tortures, were but the empty Boasts of their Pride and Vanity: for neither Philosophy nor Religion can so far extirpate or extinguish the Passions of human Nature, as to take off all Sense or Feeling of Pain; but both of them teach us so far to vanquish and subdue them by the Sense of the Divine Love and Care of us, as to be able to sustain it with Courage and Constancy: and to be of good chear, is to bear up under it, not only with Patience, but Alacrity and Chearfulness. But here Care must be taken, that the Sufferings we thus manfully sustain be of God's sending, in his Cause, and for his sake; not of our own creating, or such as we draw upon our selves by our own Faults or Follies: for to bear up under these, is rather Fool-hardiness than Patience, and no Comfort can be taken in such Sufferings; but if ye suffer for Christ's, or for Righteousness-sake, rejoice, inasmuch as ye are Partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his Glory shall be reveal'd, ye also may be glad with exceeding Joy: 1 Pet. 4. 13.

3. But

3. But what is the Motive or Argument of Consolation here us'd, to bear chearfully the Tribulations of the World? Why, 'tis from Christ's Victory over the World; *Be of good cheer* (saith he) *for I have overcome the World.* Where by the World we are to understand the Temptations, Trials, and Troubles of the World, the Spite and Malice of wicked Men, with all the Evils that may befall us in it. By overcoming the World, is meant a gaining of an absolute Power and Conquest over it, so that it can do no considerable Harm or Prejudice; and this is the Victory obtain'd by our Saviour over it. He overcame the Temptations of the World by the power of his Grace, so that all the Allurements of it cannot hurt us, without our own Consent and yielding to them; for he hath rescu'd us from their Captivity, unless we will become willing Bond-slaves to them. He overcame the Troubles and Tribulations of the World, not by shrinking from, but undergoing of them; whereby he hath taken out all the Bitterness of Afflictions, and left us only the Sweetness and Comfort of them: He pluck'd out the Sting of Death by dying, and loos'd the Bands of the Grave, by being a while holden of them; and after triumph'd over both by the power of his Resurrection. He overcame the Malice of the World, by defeating the Designs of Men and Devils against his Church and People, turning their Cruelty and Cunning against themselves, and making them the Instruments of their own Ruin, and the Church's Happiness. In a word, Christ hath overcome the Force of all present Evils by the help of his Grace, and remov'd the Fears of future, by the hopes of Glory.

But how does this Victory over the World tend to our Consolation? Why, very much; for the Battle was fought, and the Victory obtain'd merely for us: 'twere our Enemies that were foil'd and routed by it, and we are made Partakers of the Joys and Triumph acquir'd by it. He enter'd the Lists, not as a private Person or common Soldier, but as our General, and the Captain of our Salvation; he was the great Representative of all Mankind: and as he came into the World, suffer'd and dy'd in it for our sakes; so did he rise again, triumph, and ascend up to Heaven in our behalf; by all which we are *made more than Conquerors thro Christ that loved us.* And is not this matter of unspeakable Joy and Comfort to all good Christians, to share in the Successes of their Saviour, and to

bear a part in the Glories and Triumphs of such a mighty Conqueror?

Be of good cheer then, ye Fellow-Soldiers in Christ Jesus, *quit your selves like Men; be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might.* What, tho the World may set upon you with all its Troubles and Temptations? Why, they are both vanquish'd for you by your Lord and Master; and if you resist, they will soon flee from you: The World may hate, but cannot hurt you; it may allure and shew you its bright side, but if you are aware, it cannot wound or entrap you. Your Saviour despis'd the Offer of all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glories of them, when made to him upon unworthy Terms; and was therefore rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven, which infinitely exceeds all earthly Kingdoms, and to which they are all tributary and subservient.

Let us therefore *look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the Glory that was set before him, endur'd the Cross, and despis'd the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High.* Let not the Smiles of the World betray, nor the Frowns of it dismay us; for greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World. Let not the Splendor of it dazzle, nor the Terrors of it put out our Eyes; but let us look thro both to him that hath shew'd us the Shortness and Vanity of them: In a word, let us have recourse to our Saviour in all our Troubles, and rely upon him who hath overcome the World for us already, and will shortly advance us above it to the highest Heavens. Which God grant, &c.

*The End of the First Part of the
Fourth Volume.*



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